

Hafa Adai!

DFEMS responds to 4 fires as CNMI enters dry season. **PAGE 2**

Hotel occupancy at 45% in February 2024. **PAGE 3**

\$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 61

www.saipantribune.com

TUESDAY MARCH 26, 2024

www.facebook.com/saipantribune

United sets new Tokyo-Saipan schedule



SESSION WITH US EDUCATION LEADERS

The Council of Chief State School Officers Legislative Conference with the U.S. Department of Education held a session with Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa education leaders on March 20, 2024, "to discuss updates and issues, and how the U.S. DOE and CCSSO can continue its support to school districts in the U.S. territories." The CNMI Public School System was represented by Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence F. Camacho, Federal Programs officer Jacqueline P. Che, and former interim commissioner of education and current State Special Education Program director Donna M. Flores. The American Samoa Department of Education was represented by director Talauega Dr. Samasoni Asaeli, Fiscal officer Falaga Tauiliili, Business Office manager Jasper Tuiaosopo, and Communications director Dr. Josephine Paulo. The session was with ranking USDOE officials: Dr. Patrick Carr, director of Rural, Insular, and Native Achievement Programs; Dr. Tiffany Forrester, group leader, Rural, Insular, and Native Achievement Programs; and Christine Jackson, senior risk consultant, Rural, Insular, and Native Achievement Programs. The CCSSO officials were Melissa McGrath, chief of staff; Peter Zamora, director of Federal Relations and Policy; and Aaron Fettgather, senior associate, State Implementation. The session was part of the three-day CCSSO Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. which was held from March 20 to 22.

United Airlines has announced a new schedule for its thrice weekly flight between Tokyo-Narita and the Marianas beginning May 7, 2024. The new schedule will depart Tokyo-Narita International Airport on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday at 5:30pm and arrive at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport at 9:55pm and depart Saipan on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 11:50am and arrive in Tokyo at 2:25pm.

See UNITED on Page 4

CHCC threatened by potential data breach

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. was recently threatened by a potential breach in its system that could've compromised sensitive patient information. Fortunately, CHCC's Health Information Technology department managed to safeguard CHCC's network infrastructure before that could happen.

Over the weekend, *Saipan Tribune* was forwarded a site

warning that CHCC's internal servers may have experienced a complete data breach that compromised its data, including sensitive patient data.

CHCC, in a statement yesterday, said the entire healthcare sector itself has been experiencing cyberattacks in the last few weeks.

"Over the past few weeks, the healthcare sector has experienced a surge in cyberattacks, posing significant threats to the confidentiality,

See CHCC on Page 4

Villanueva to appear in court next week

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court has ordered Shayne Blanco Villanueva to appear before a judge next week pursuant to the

contempt charge the Office of the Attorney General filed against him.

This comes soon after Villanueva self-surrendered to the Department of Corrections last Friday, March 22,

pursuant to an arrest warrant that charged him with contempt. The same day, Villanueva posted a bail of \$1,000 for his release.

The Superior Court or-

See COURT on Page 4

Palacios says he wanted to hire Davis, but...



Palacios

By FERGIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios said on Thursday he actually wanted to hire for his office Shalee M. David, a consultant for the Munis system, to train government employees on the system, but

Finance Secretary Tracy B. Norita convinced him otherwise.

Palacios said in an interview that Norita cited several conflicts in hiring Davis. Apparently, Davis was also working for the Senate and that there's certain confidentiality in some of the

See PALACIOS on Page 4

INSIDE



LOCAL

Northern Marianas College nursing instructors recently engaged in professional development training.

PAGE 5



WORLD

Four men accused of staging the Russia concert hall attack appear before a Moscow court.

PAGE 11



LIFE & STYLE

"Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire" collected \$45.2 million in ticket sales over the weekend.

PAGE 12



SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.



GOT A NEWS TIP?

TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440

FAX: 235-3740

EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

DFEMS responds to four fires as CNMI enters dry season

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services has responded to four fires in the last week as the CNMI en-

ters the dry season.

Over the weekend, a massive brush fire was reported just across the St. Jude Parish in Koblerville. According to DFEMS spokesperson Rob Mojica, the fire, which was

reported early last Friday, was the fourth one DFEMS responded to in the area.

"We had four grass fires last week, three on Thursday, then one on Friday," he said.

The most recent fire, Mo-

jica said, was reported at around 1am in As Gonno/Koblerville and multiple units responded. DFEMS managed to contain the fire at around 3am. In total, possibly a good five or six acres

of grassland were burned, Mojica reports.

DFEMS warns the community that, as the CNMI enters dry season, vegetation turns into fuel, so take precautionary measures.

"The days are getting hotter, and vegetation is turning into fuel. We strongly urge the community to be cautious when throwing cigarette butts or glass products out into the jungles. It can take just one single spark to start a fire, destroying everything in its path," he said.

DeLeon Guerrero bill seeks to allow the NMI Settlement Fund to adjust benefit payments

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) has introduced a bill that will allow the NMI Settlement Fund to adjust benefit payments to reflect the correct calculation going forward and to authorize waivers of overpayments of retirement benefits.

This is separate but related to DeLeon Guerrero's recent filing of a Senate resolution requesting the NMI Settlement Fund to waive the recovery of overpayment of benefits based on "fairness, equity, and good conscience."

DeLeon Guerrero stated in her proposed legislation, Senate Bill 23-61, that the NMI Settlement Fund has served hundreds of retirees with notices of over-

payments and adjustments of retirement benefits after conducting a benefits audit.

She said most, if not all, of the overpayment calculations were made by the former NMI Retirement Fund and through no fault of retirees.

DeLeon Guerrero said the Settlement Fund's determination to recover overpayments of benefits has adversely shaken the lives of the affected retirees.

The Senate president said the laws of the U.S. government, as well most of the states and territories, provide for waivers of overpayments of various benefits, including social security benefits, state retirement benefits, unemployment benefits, veteran's benefits, family and medical leave benefits.

DeLeon Guerrero said the general standard for a waiver of recovery of overpayment of benefits is that the individual is not at fault and recovery or repayment is against equity and good conscience.

Senate Bill 23-61 proposes to amend 1 CMC Section 8390 that refers to overpayment or underpayment of benefits to read that "whenever the administrator finds that more or less than the correct amount of benefits have been paid with respect to any individual, proper adjustment shall be made by appropriate adjustments to future payments to the member or any survivors, or from the estate of any recipient of benefits."

Under the bill, "unless fraud, misrepresentations or concealment of material in-

formation was involved in connection with an overpayment, there shall be no recovery of overpayments by the NMI Settlement Fund from any member, any survivors, or from the estate of any recipient of benefits who is without fault and if such recovery would be against equity and good conscience."

Upon appeal to the NMI Settlement Fund by an affected member of beneficia-

ry, "the Settlement Fund may waive an overpayment if, in the opinion of the Settlement Fund, the individual is without fault and recovery of an overpayment is against equity and good conscience."

'Bermudes' attendance at PELP seminar in Hawaii surprises CNMI participants'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Clement R. Bermudes already resigned as Department of Public Safety commissioner last Jan. 26, 2024, so his attendance at the Pacific Executive Leaders Program at the 'Imiloa Astronomy Center of the University of Hawaii at Hilo from March 4 to 8, 2024, came as a surprise to

the CNMI delegation.

Saipan Tribune learned that aside from Bermudes, four from the CNMI attended the weeklong seminar sponsored by the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, and Federal Emergency Management Agency. The CNMI government did not incur any expense for that seminar.

The four participants are CNMI Homeland Security and Emergency Management special assistant Franklin Babauta, CNMI HSEM

grants manager Naomi Ada Tagabuel, Division of Customs and Biosecurity director

Jose Mafnas, and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. chief executive officer Esther L. Muña.

As of press time, *Saipan Tribune* was still waiting for comments from Bermudes.

In response to *Saipan Tribune's* inquiry, Babauta and Muña confirmed yesterday that Bermudes did attend the seminar.

Babauta said they were **See BERMUDES on Page 4**



Bermudes

SCS 3rd quarter honor list

Saipan Community School congratulates the following students that made it to the 2023/2024 third quarter honor list.

Principal's Ist 4.00 (No grade below a A)

Jeordan Buduan-4th grade
Iyani Muna-5th grade
Elijah Pangelinan-7th grade
Tony Xiao-7th grade
Jose Sablan-8th grade
Annabella Tudela-8th grade
Richard Zhao-8th grade

Olivia Um-5th grade
Jina Chun-6th grade
Hiyori Okuma-6th grade
Micaela Tenorio-6th grade
Jesus Villagomez-6th grade
Vivian Chung-7th grade
Karis Han-7th grade
Jason Sablan-7th grade
Farani Tonuu-7th grade
Ian Chae-8th grade
Christine Kim-8th grade
Elin Kim-8th grade
Ray Patrick McDonald-8th grade
Erine So-8th grade

A Honor Roll 3.50 to 3.99 (No grades below a B)

Christopher Chen-4th grade
Riel Mina Choi-4th grade
Arianna DeLeon Guerrero-4th grade
Aileen Kim-4th grade
Leila Pangelinan-4th grade
Lennox Sablan-4th grade
Amethyst Winkfield-4th grade
Fiona Yu-4th grade
Jihan Delos Reyes-5th grade
Dennis Guo-5th grade
Heesoo Han-5th grade
Seungwoo Lee-5th grade
Keavene Punzalan-5th grade

B Honor Roll 3.00 to 3.49 (No grades below a C)

Troy Anthony Aldan-4th grade
Melvin Reyes-4th grade
Ailin Zhou-4th grade
Damien Camacho-5th grade
Junwoo Kwon-5th grade
Joshua McDonald-5th grade
Ryan Macaranas-6th grade
Claire Oh-6th grade
Vanna Alvarez-7th grade
Hui An-7th grade
Allysa Brasuell-7th grade
Nicole Williams-7th grade
Daniel Nae-8th grade
Jihun Park-8th grade. (PR)

Hotel occupancy at 45% in February 2024

The Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands reported 45% average occupancy rate among its 12 member-hotels for February 2024, a 134% increase compared to 19% average occupancy among 11 hotels in February 2023.

A total of 39,806 of 68,804 available room nights sold during February 2024, a 266% increase compared to 10,946 of 57,257 available rooms sold in February 2023. Average room rates were \$138.56 compared to \$153.47 last February.

"Compared to a year ago, February saw a tremendous increase in average occupancy and total rooms sold among HANMI member hotels due to strong demand during the Lunar New Year holiday and school winter vacations. However, the overall average occupancy rate of 45% remains critically low for hotels, as our profit margin starts at about 80% occupancy," said HANMI chair Dennis Seo.

In February, visitor arrivals from Korea rose 37% com-

pared to February 2023, a welcomed increase but also a contributing factor in the falling room rate due to overdependence on one source market.

"We eagerly await the start of direct flights from Hong Kong by Hong Kong Airlines arriving on April 29, which we hope marks the start of the rebound of the China market," said Seo. "This is the right time for hotels to market our products and services in Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China."

Seo added that HANMI is also supporting the public land lease extension of Coral Ocean Resort as an important investment in the Marianas tourism economy.

Hotels included in HANMI's monthly statistical report are Aqua Resort Club, Aquarius Beach Tower, Century Hotel, Coral Ocean Resort, GrandVrio Resort Saipan, Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, Hyatt Regency Saipan, Kensington Hotel Saipan, LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort, Pacific Islands Club Saipan, Saipan

World Resort, and Surfrider Resort Hotel.

HANMI was established in 1985 as a professional forum for the hospitality industry of the Marianas. HANMI also makes regular charitable do-

nations to support non-profit organizations and tourism-related government projects. HANMI membership is open to all qualified hotels and oth-

er loading properties for tourists and affiliated business. Membership applications are available at www.saipanhotels.org. (**HANMI**)

NMI Judiciary holds Covenant discussion in time for Covenant celebration

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI Judiciary hosted the inaugural Covenant Day *Konbetsasion*: "Understanding the Covenant" last Friday as part of its celebration of the 35th anniversary of the Northern Marianas Judiciary, just a couple of days before the CNMI's annual Covenant Day celebration last Sunday.

The NMI Judiciary, Supreme Court, Judiciary Historical Society, in collaboration with the Northern Marianas College hosted the first *Konbetsasion*: "Understanding the Covenant" event at the Guma Hustisa in Susupe.

During the event, two of the Covenant's original negotiators, Pedro A. Tenorio and Manuel A. Sablan, took the stage to answer questions and give attendees insights into how the Covenant, which essentially established the Commonwealth, came to be.

In attendance was Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, CNMI stakeholders, and students from the Northern Marianas College and Marianas High School.

After the event, Palacios expressed his gratitude to Tenorio and Sablan for taking the time to answer questions and initiate conversation about the Covenant.

"We are appreciative of Pedro A. Tenorio and Manuel A. Sablan who were part of the



KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The CNMI Judiciary hosted the inaugural Covenant Day *Konbetsasion*: "Understanding the Covenant" last Friday as part of its celebration of the 35th anniversary of the Northern Marianas Judiciary.

negotiating team. We really appreciate how they encapsulate the struggles and all the work that our negotiators made to get us where we are at today. A lot of these [individuals] studied and worked hard to put us where we are today. Now, it's up to our generation and the next to uphold it. I believe the Judiciary did a really good job in capturing this," he said.

Palacios said the event is a great way for members of the community, as well as students, to learn about the CNMI's history.

"This is part of our history, this is who we are and there are still a lot of kinks, still a lot of issues that we need to overcome, [but] they're not insurmountable," he said.

According to Nathan Ford, law clerk to Justice Perry Inos of the Supreme Court, although the event was organized as part of the Judiciary's 35th anniversary celebration, luck would have it that the event nearly coincides with the CNMI's Covenant Day celebration.

"As luck would have it, Covenant Day is early in the year so it kind of worked out. But I think it's also a very fitting [event] because the Covenant is the foundational moment before the Commonwealth came to be. It made sense to kick off [our celebration with this event] because after the Covenant, the Judiciary could be created," he said.

Ford said it was great to have so many generations

present for the Covenant conversation.

"We were really excited to have a large presence from several classes from NMC and MHS. It's good to have multiple generations involved in these conversations to hear from some of our founding fathers who negotiated with ambassadors from the U.S. and were there when President Gerald Ford signed it. We [had] so many generations [in attendance] and I think it's very important because we're at a moment where we can still get that foundational history from the mouths of the people who were there. It's important that it gets passed on and people of every generation have the ability to participate and ask questions," he said.

CHCC's IT safeguards network vs. cyberattack

The healthcare sector experienced a surge in cyberattacks over the past few weeks, posing significant threats to the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of sensitive medical data. These attacks have targeted hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare facilities, compromising patient information, disrupting critical services, and potentially jeopardizing patient safety.

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. was recently threatened by potential data exfiltration, but with much diligence, all security measures are being employed to prevent any further threats and protect all data.

In collaboration with CNMI Homeland Security and other federal agencies, a thorough investigation remains in place to confirm the nature of the threat, and security measures are being implemented. We prioritize safeguarding the privacy of our patients and CHCC is currently evaluating the threat and working with authorities ensuring we are in compliance with federal laws.

There are no disruptions to clinical and emergency services. Critical patient care will continue without interruption, and our healthcare professionals are committed to providing the best possible care under these challenging circumstances.

If you've received any com-

munications regarding suspicious activities of a similar nature, it's imperative that you refrain from further engagement as we continue to work with authorities.

CHCC remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering high-quality healthcare services and ensuring the security of patient data. (**PR**)

Name: Jovahnalyn Nicole Rabauliman
Address: P.O. Box 5728 CHRB
Saipan, MP 96950
Phone: (670) 783-2931
Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the) FCD CN
Petition for the) CIVIL ACTION
Change of Name of:) NO. 22-0115
Jovahnalyn Nicole)
Rabauliman) NOTICE OF
Petitioner) HEARING
)
)

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on April 15, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom 217A, before Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio.

Dated this 15 day of February, 2024.

Patrick V. Diaz
Clerk of Court
/s/
By: Deputy Clerk of Court



Northern Marianas College
Procurement & Property Management Office
P.O. Box 501250 CK, Saipan, MP 96950 U.S.A.
Tel.: (670) 234-5498 ext. 2300/01/02 Fax: (670) 235-7601
E-mail: ppmo@marianas.edu

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

NMC RFP 24-001
RENTAL PROPERTY FOR THE CREES CENTER
FOR AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Northern Marianas College - Department of Financial Services Unit is soliciting competitive sealed bids for Proposal of a RENTAL PROPERTY FOR THE CREES CENTER FOR AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

The bid packet may be picked up at the NMC Procurement Office, Bldg. P, commencing Tuesday, March 26, 2024 between the hours of 9:00-11:30a.m. and 1:00-4:00p.m. Electronic packet may be requested to Odin C. Garces at ppmo@marianas.edu.

Bid Submission Due Date: April 26, 2024 at 10:00 a.m., at Northern Marianas College, As Terlaje Campus, Procurement Office, Bldg. P, Saipan, MP 96950.

This solicitation does not constitute an offer and does not obligate the College in any way. The NMC reserves the right to reject any and/or all bids for any reason and waive any defect in said bids, or cancel in part or its entirety this RFP, if it deems, in its sole discretion, it is in the best interest of the College. All costs incurred by the bidder to prepare a response to this solicitation and subsequent inquiries shall be borne by the bidder. All submittals shall become the property of NMC and will not be returned.

/s/Odin C. Garces
NMC Procurement & Property Management Office



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID

ITB NO.: DPW24-ITB No.: 42400068

SUBMISSION DATE: April 19, 2024 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Procurement of Services for Removal, Packaging, Containment, and Shipping of E-Waste Materials Collected at the Lower Base Transfer Station."

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after **March 19, 2024**, at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan. A non-refundable payment of **One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00)** is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Treasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at the DPW Technical Services Division.

There will be a Pre-bid Conference for this project on **April 04, 2024, 9:00 a.m.** local time at the Solid Waste Management Division Conference Room, Lower Base Transfer Station, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **4:30 p.m. local time on April 12, 2024** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/s/RAY N. YUMUL
Secretary, DPW

/s/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
Acting Director, Division of Procurement Services

\$20K bail for man accused of assault with dangerous weapon

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court has imposed a \$20,000 cash bail on a man accused of threatening another man with a knife in a fit of rage.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho imposed Friday a \$20,000 cash bail on Fares Nimer, who is facing charges of assault with a dangerous weapon, assault, and disturbing the peace.

After the bail hearing, Camacho remanded Nimer back to Department of Corrections custody and ordered him to return to court for a preliminary hearing next month.

According to court documents, two police officers were on routine patrol at around 12:16am on Thursday, March 14, and were heading south on Beach Road in Garapan when they saw a man, lat-



Fares Nimer, a man accused of assaulting another with a knife, is escorted by a Department of Corrections officer to a hearing before Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho.

er identified as Nimer, walking north along the road.

Police made a U-turn to check on Nimer and as they were approaching, one of the officers rolled down his window and heard shouting from what sounded like a man.

As he got closer, police observed Nimer holding a shiny object walking toward another male individual, later identified as Perry Tudela.

Tudela saw the police vehicle and ran to it shouting that Nimer had what he described as a "machete" and was allegedly threatening to kill him.

That same day, at around 3pm, police met with Tudela at the Commonwealth Health Center where he was admitted for a follow-up interview.

According to Tudela, he and his common-law wife had just left CHCC and had gone to Garapan Fishing Base for fresh air. When they

stepped out of their vehicle, they heard a man shouting and when Tudela turned, he said he saw Nimer walking toward him and shouting in the Chuukese language with

what he thought was a machete in his hand.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

COURT

From page 1

dered Villanueva to return to court next week, April 1, for his arraignment.

"It is hereby ordered that the defendant be released from custody and is further ordered to return to court on Monday, April 1, at 9am at the Guma Hustisia, Courtroom 202A before Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja. All parties are ordered to appear," states the order.

The contempt charge comes after he refused to answer the questions of the House Special Committee Federal Assistance & Disaster-Related Funding that is investigating the federally-funded Building Optimism, Opportunities and Stability Together or BOOST program of the previous administration. Villanueva appeared before the committee on March 5, 2024, and invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination when asked questions about BOOST.

Villanueva is the owner of Roil Soil Marketing, which the administration of then-governor Ralph DLG Torres contracted to help market and promote the \$17-million BOOST program in 2022.

According to the House committee that's investigating the BOOST program, the documents it gathered indicated that Villanueva was paid by

the previous administration \$215,000 "at the very least," for marketing the program.

After refusing to respond to the committee's questions, the committee found him in contempt, and Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) transmitted to Attorney General Edward Manibusan a "certification of statement of contempt" pertaining to Villanueva.

The speaker cited 1 CMC Section 1306(a), which states that "a person shall be in contempt if the person...having appeared fails or refuses to testify under oath or affirmation."

"Villanueva is clearly in contempt as he has refused to answer any questions posed by the committee regardless of the question's incriminatory nature. Consequently, the committee, by majority vote of its members, determined that his actions established contempt and moved to report this fact to the House of Representatives on March 5, 2024, by a unanimous vote," the speaker said.

Two other former BOOST contractors, Rob Travilla and Salina Sapp, appeared before the House committee and also invoked the Fifth Amendment in refusing to answer questions about BOOST.

On March 15, 2024, Villagomez transmitted to the AG a certification of contempt pertaining to Travilla and Sapp, who were also contracted to market the BOOST program.

PALACIOS

From page 1

data in Finance that has to be confined to the department, Palacios said.

"So it's all good," said the governor, adding that he hopes that Norita and her staff and Davis "all kissed and made up" before the consultant left the CNMI.

Davis is consultant/owner of Davis ERP Consulting.

She was set to depart from the CNMI last Friday. Saipan Tribune learned that Davis

provided Munis training services through the Legislative Bureau for both House and Senate, and LB employees.

Munis integrates finances, payroll, human resources, purchasing, fixed assets, revenue streams, and other government processes.

Davis recently shared her observations and recommendations to Palacios about her consulting work for the Munis system with the CNMI government over the past year.

Davis stated, among other things, that despite the Munis system being implemented to

modernize processes in the CNMI government, many tasks are still being carried out using paper-based methods—even if Munis already offers digital alternatives—and moves to improve the system is being hindered by the lack of support from Norita and her staff.

In her response, Norita recently sent a memorandum to Palacios stating that Davis was actually part of the Tyler Munis implementation team and, although she is leaving after failing to secure a consulting contract with the Office of the Governor, they (Finance) still

maintain support services of other Munis experts from Tyler Technologies, which is the Munis software company that assists thousands of other government offices.

Norita said Davis has invaluable historical knowledge in the implementation decisions of former Finance secretary David DLG. Atalig and management during that period.

Norita said, however, the shift in priorities to build local capacity did not align well with Davis and the difference in personalities and cultures did not "fit."

CHCC

From page 1

integrity, and availability of sensitive medical data," CHCC said. "These attacks have targeted hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare facilities, compromising patient information, disrupting critical services, and potentially jeopardizing patient safety."

CHCC became faced with the same threat, but thanks to its swift actions, CHCC managed to protect all sensitive data.

"The CHCC was recently threatened by potential data exfiltration, but with much diligence, all security measures are being employed to prevent any further threats and protect all data," said CHCC.

The healthcare sector has also enlisted the help of federal agencies to thoroughly investigate the cyberattacks.

"We prioritize safeguarding the privacy of our patients and CHCC is currently evaluating the threat and working with authorities ensuring we are in compliance with federal laws. In collaboration with

CNMI Homeland Security and other federal agencies, a thorough investigation remains in place to confirm the nature of the threat, and security measures are being implemented," said CHCC.

In the meantime, CHCC warns patients not to engage with any communication or activity involving CHCC that may seem suspicious.

"If you've received any communications regarding suspicious activities of a similar nature, it's imperative that you refrain from further engagement as we continue

to work with authorities," said CHCC.

CHCC also assures its patients that there are no disruptions to clinical and emergency services.

"Critical patient care will continue without interruption, and our healthcare professionals are committed to providing the best possible care under these challenging circumstances. CHCC remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering high-quality healthcare services and ensuring the security of patient data," said CHCC.

UNITED

From page 1

The airline's announcement was welcomed by the Marianas Visitors Authority, which had requested the airline to revise the schedule to help increase visitor arrivals from Japan to the Marianas.

"The Marianas Visitors Authority is very excited about the new schedule announced by United Airlines for Tokyo-Saipan service beginning May 7," said MVA

managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "It's something we have been in discussion with them about for several months, and we are grateful that it has finally been approved by United headquarters in Chicago in coordination with their Guam and Tokyo offices. We anticipate this to have a positive impact toward more Japanese choosing our destination as outbound travel from Japan continues to slowly recover from the pandemic."

The new schedule brings

several benefits for Japanese visitors to the Marianas. An early evening departure time from Tokyo-Narita is more familiar and more convenient for most Japanese travelers and especially the family market, which comprises most of Japanese visitors to the Marianas.

In addition, the late morning departure time from Saipan will reduce the number of required hotel nights, reducing travel expenses for travel to the Marianas. This new schedule will also benefit

passengers transiting through Tokyo as they travel between the Marianas and the U.S. mainland as it shortens the layover time in Tokyo-Narita to just a few hours.

The Marianas received 838 visitors from Japan in February 2024 compared to 605 visitors in February 2023. Although the number of Japanese travelling abroad has nearly doubled in the last year, the number was still 42% lower in January 2024 compared to pre-pandemic in 2019. (MVA)

BERMUDES

From page 2

surprised to see Bermudes at the seminar, but he did not ask Bermudes why he was there and that he believes the others from Saipan too did not ask him.

"My reason for not asking him is that I believe that the PELP coordinator knows already because they changed his (Bermudes) title on the table. They took out the commissioner title," said Babauta, adding that the title was changed to "LTC Army, retired."

Bermudes is a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel.

Babauta said during the seminar, the program had only 19 participants/students, and the rest were program facilitators.

To participate in the seminar, one should first be invited as a CNMI government employee, Babauta said.

The PELP is a graduate-level educational offering built upon the existing Executive Leaders Program, which

is composed of local, state, tribal, territorial and federal officials, as well as private sector partners. The seminar included a variety of presentations on homeland security and emergency management issues confronting the Pacific region. The topics discussed included public policy, regional, national and international risk, cyber challenges, effective communication, collaboration, leadership, and capacity building, according to David Fukutomi, who is the associate director for the Center for Homeland Defense and Security executive education program in a letter to the participants.

Last Jan. 26, Bermudes resigned as DPS commissioner at the instruction of Gov. Arnold I. Palacios.

The governor noted that despite his explicit instructions regarding Police Sgt. Peter Camacho's assignment at Marianas Regional Fusion Center at the CNMI Homeland Security, Camacho was purposely issued an AWOL notice and subjected to unwarranted punitive measures.

NMC nursing instructors hone skills with simulation lab training

Northern Marianas College nursing instructors recently engaged in professional development by participating in a healthcare simulation lab training conducted by Erica Davis, associate director of the Hawaii/Pacific Basin Area Health Education Center.

During the training, nursing instructors learned to operate simulation equipment, set up learning environments, utilize appropriate briefing techniques, employ effective debriefing strategies for post-simulation discussions, and address learning gaps while providing constructive feedback.

The NMC nursing instructors used the college's health simulation lab, inaugurated in



Erica Davis, left, associate director of the Hawaii/Pacific Basin Area Health Education Center, conducts a training course for Northern Marianas College nursing instructors. NMC

November 2023.

NMC Nursing Department chair Rosa Aldan said she is very grateful for the training and is excited to teach the next generation of healthcare professionals for the CNMI using the simulation lab.

"I am very grateful for the training provided by Erica Davis and her team," Aldan said. "With this enhanced expertise, I am excited to equip the next generation of healthcare professionals for the CNMI using our simulation lab. This training has empowered us to create immersive learning experiences that will undoubtedly shape the future of healthcare in our community."

The college's simulation lab replicates a hospital room, allowing students to practice realistic medical scenarios on mid to high-fidelity mannequins.

Some mannequins simulate pulses, while others mimic various injuries. Additionally, there are mannequins stationed for anatomy and intubation practice. Medical equipment within the center can display blood oxygen levels, blood pressure, and other vital signs.

"Simulation training is a fundamental aspect of healthcare education, enabling students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical scenarios," Davis said. "By empowering NMC instructors with enhanced simulation facilitation skills, we can ensure that students receive the most impactful and immersive educational experiences possible."

For further information about the AHEC simulation lab, contact NMC's Area Health Education Center at ahec@marianas.edu. (NMC)

Discover Easter fun at The Terrace Restaurant this Sunday

This Easter Sunday, discover egg-cellent Easter fun at The Terrace!

Join us for brunch, an egg hunt, and cookie decorating with the chef at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan! Bring your family and friends to enjoy a feast of delicious dishes, fun-filled activities, and a chance to win exciting prizes.

On Sunday, March 31, from 11am to 2pm, indulge in a sumptuous buffet featuring whole smoked pig, roasted garlic-studded lamb, and smoked tomahawk steak at our live carving station. For more flavors, dive into fresh seafood on ice like crab legs, prawns, oysters, and more. Enjoy sushi and sashimi and a variety of hot dishes, such as salmon

teriyaki, local tempura, spicy coconut seafood stew, and beef pot roast. Satisfy your sweet tooth with desserts like a variety of cakes, bread pudding, assorted fruits, authentic gelato, and more.

Raise a toast with free-flowing beverages, including draft beer, red and white wine, sparkling wine, mimosas, post mix cocktail, coffee and tea to add extra cheer to your celebration.

"I'm excited to welcome families to The Terrace this Easter," said chef de cuisine Jesse Aguon. "Join us for delicious food with our all-inclusive buffet and fun activities our teams put together for families to enjoy. I can't wait to see you and

your loved ones enjoying our Easter celebration!"

While you sip and savor all the delicious choices, the children can get creative at the live cookie decoration station starting at 12pm, decorating Easter-themed cookies with colorful toppings. The fun doesn't end there. Join in the thrill of an egg hunt starting at 1pm to search for one of the three golden eggs for a chance to win amazing prizes!

Celebrate Easter in style at only \$65 per adult and \$25 per child (ages 4-11 years old) at The Terrace Restaurant.

Reserve your table today for an unforgettable Easter celebration filled with culinary delights, family-friendly activities, and Easter magic at The Terrace Restaurant, Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan. For reservations and inquiries, email cprsaipan@ihg.com or call at (670) 234-6412. (PR)



CHICKEN & BEER

Coconut frappe

Caramel frappe

Hazelnut frappe

Mocha frappe

\$5.00

ORDER NOW

DELIVERY TIME:
5:30PM - 11:00PM
OPERATION HOURS:
5:30PM - 12:00MN

(670) 234-3331
(670) 234-3330

LOCATED AT CHALAN KANOA, ADJACENT TO CK SMOKEHOUSE

GRAPHIC DESIGN SERVICES

GET THE DESIGNS YOU NEED

- ✓ Brochure Design
- ✓ Advertisement Design
- ✓ Banner Design

- ✓ Logo Design
- ✓ Designing Business Cards
- ✓ Poster Design

(670) 235-2440

sales@saipantribune.com

www.saipantribune.com

Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 61

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Blame Canada

Progressives insist that Donald Trump will turn the United States into an authoritarian state if voters return him to the White House. They should pay close attention to what's going on north of the border, where one of their own is in charge.

Last month, the Canadian government introduced the Online Harms Act, which creates a "new legislative and regulatory framework to reduce harmful content on social media platforms," Tech Policy.press reports. The proposal, backed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, would establish the Digital Safety Commission to monitor sites for so-called "hate speech" and content that might be harmful to children.

The fine print is a tribute to bureaucratic overreach and one of the most glaring affronts to free expression ever concocted by a Western government.

The legislation would give Canadian judges the power to issue sentences of life in prison for certain online speech violations. It permits the authorities to impose house arrest and fines if there are "reasonable grounds" to believe an individual "will commit" an offense, allowing for speculative punishment of speech crimes. The measure amends the Canadian Human Rights Act "to classify hate speech as discrimination," the BBC reports, while empowering the Human Rights Tribunal to oversee hate speech offenses.

The act also gives "anyone the ability to file a complaint ... alleging online hate speech," Michael Taube, a Canadian columnist, wrote this week in a Wall Street Journal commentary. That will no doubt lead to a "massive influx of complaints," one observer noted, as partisans exploit the law to harass their political enemies.

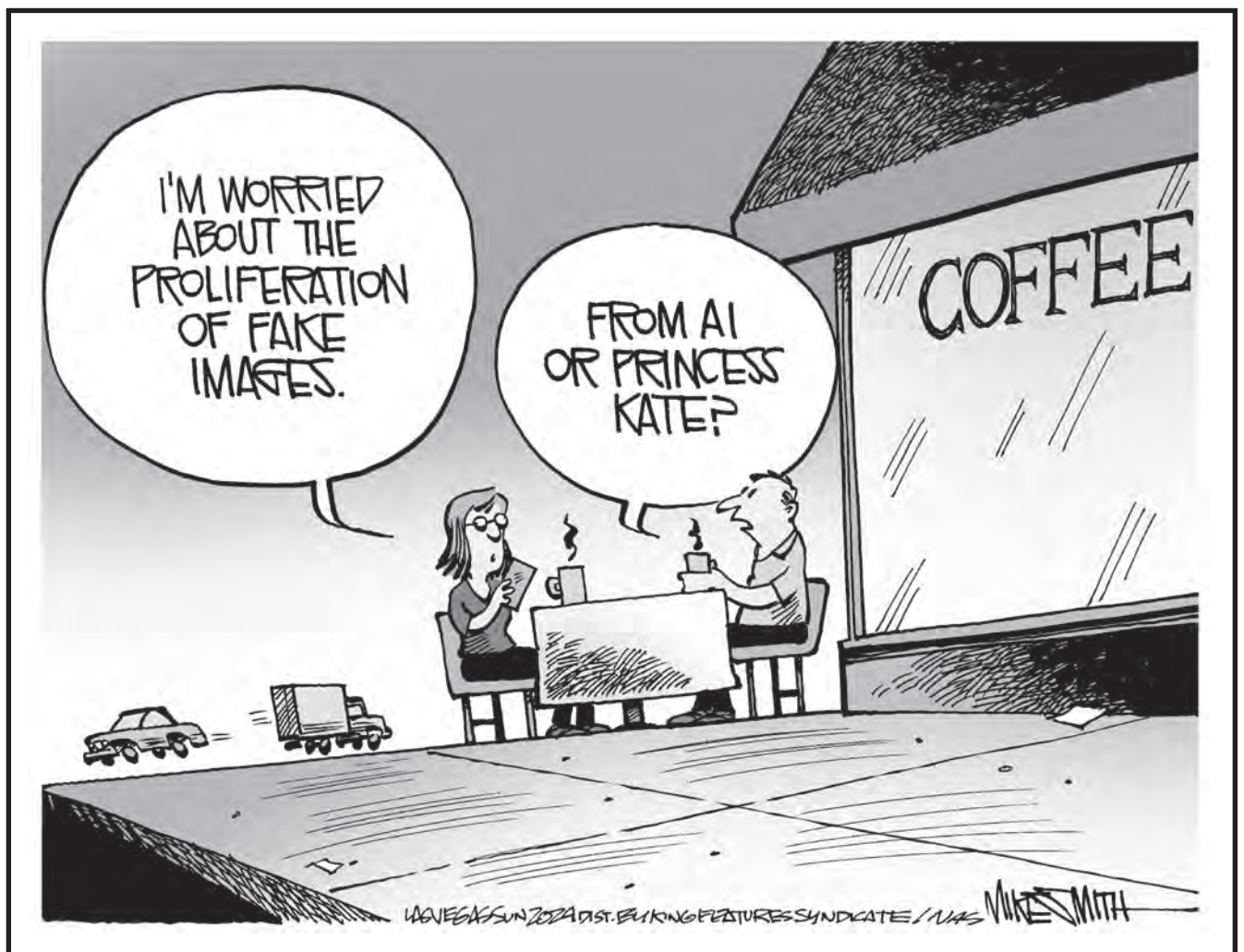
As one might expect, what constitutes "hate speech" is vaguely defined and open-ended. That alone should be cause for concern.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association piled on. The legislation, the group said, "includes overbroad violations of expressive freedom, privacy, protest rights and liberty." It bestows "vast authority" in a new bureaucracy "to interpret the law, make up new rules, enforce them and then serve as judge, jury and executioner." It grants the government "sweeping new search powers of electronic data with no warrant requirement." In addition, "The broad criminal prohibitions on speech in the bill risk stifling public discourse and criminalizing political activism."

All of this is brought to you by the progressive Trudeau and Canada's Liberal Party. But the totalitarian sentiment underlying this Orwellian proposal also runs through the minds of many virtue-signaling U.S. activists, who consider the First Amendment a tool of oppression and long for similar criminal restrictions in this country on any utterance or posting that might offend anybody anywhere.

Trump carries plenty of baggage. But as Trudeau's foray into aggressive state censorship reveals, many of those mewling about the former president being a "threat to democracy" have their own soft spots for tyranny.

©2024 LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL



The US needs a 9/11 Commission for COVID

During the third week of March 2020, with little public debate and less warning, Americans were told to stay in their homes indefinitely as COVID cases climbed. There were only a few days between bland reassurances and lockdown orders—just enough time to go panic shopping for toilet paper.

The first pandemic year represents a crisis distinct from the period after vaccines became widely available. Congress should establish something like the 9/11 Commission—independent and bipartisan—to reexamine why our early response was so disruptive and yet so ineffective. A report issued in time for next year's anniversary of the start of the pandemic might identify weaknesses in the country's general inability to deal with the next crisis, whatever that entails.

Some eye-opening analyses covering that first year have recently appeared in "Lessons From the COVID War," by a panel of scientists and policy experts, and "The Big Fail: What the Pandemic Revealed About Who America Protects and Who It Leaves Behind," by journalists Joe Nocera and Bethany McLean. But an official bipartisan treatment would have a big impact on our polarized nation.

Such a commission should first address why our elected leaders and expert agencies didn't warn the public sooner. There was strong evidence by early February 2020 that this disease had already spread far beyond Wuhan, China, that it could travel invisibly through mild cases, and that the oldest people were at highest risk.

Some fair warning could have helped people take voluntary measures to avoid infection and prepare for disruption. But for much of January and February we got false reassurance. Even when Nancy Messonnier of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Feb. 25 that the virus might cause "severe" disruption, CDC deputy director Anne Schuchat pushed back, saying "our efforts at containment have worked." It wasn't until mid-March that the White House declared COVID a national emergency.

The delays in issuing clear warnings were part of a perverse disregard for the effects of time in a crisis. When protective measures began mattered. So did the timing of lifting or changing those measures. People can better stick with sacrifices that have a specific duration and a realistic goal.

Waiting to issue warnings and directives until after the disease was widespread meant more deaths—and the need for more extreme measures to get the same level of mitigation. And it isn't hindsight bias to say that extreme measures such as shutting schools, businesses and public events would have been less harmful if done for two or three weeks rather than months.

The scenes of people dying in hospital corridors in Italy made it seem necessary to take drastic measures in the US to "flatten the curve" of infection, but there was no scientific case for trying to

By F.D. FLAM

Bloomberg Opinion

F.D. Flam is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering science. She is host of the "Follow the Science" podcast.



eradicate an already widespread virus by keeping extreme measures in place long term.

A COVID commission could also look at what government, employers and communities might have done to prevent deaths among essential workers and their families. While Americans saw limited improvements in paid sick leave policy, the situation called for more. Essential workers who were at risk or lived with people in fragile health should have been able to opt out of work—their jobs taken over temporarily by the many healthy, younger Americans who were unafraid and whose mental health might have improved with the chance to contribute rather than stay cooped up alone.

And a special investigation could also help puncture the thin excuse that US leaders made bad decisions because of a lack of data on a novel virus. Even in those early days of 2020, we had enough information to act more rationally. By early April, there was already growing evidence that the virus was spreading primarily indoors through airborne transmission and there was very little risk outdoors.

Blunt closures of businesses, schools, beaches and parks threw that knowledge out the window—and they didn't represent scientific consensus. Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy in Minnesota, co-wrote a Washington Post op-ed published on March 21, 2020 warning that indefinite, sweeping lockdowns were not the best course of action for saving lives:

The best alternative will probably entail letting those at low risk for serious disease continue to work, keep business and manufacturing operating, and 'run' society, while at the same time advising higher-risk individuals to protect themselves through physical distancing and ramping up our health-care capacity as aggressively as possible.

A targeted strategy could have harnessed what scientists had discerned about who was at the most risk of dying and which kinds of work were riskiest.

Osterholm stood by this view when I spoke to him this month.

See COVID on Page 7

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Major European powers are divided on Ukraine

It wasn't long ago when French President Emmanuel Macron fancied himself as Europe's Vladimir Putin whisperer—somebody who could call up the Russian authoritarian, have an even-keeled conversation and talk some sense into him. This is precisely what Macron tried to do in the lead-up to Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine. Four days before Putin gave the order, Macron, desperation in his voice, tried to test the Russian president's interest in a diplomatic arrangement that could avert all-out war.

Macron's gambit obviously didn't work. Two years of destruction and hundreds of thousands of casualties later, the French president is no longer angling to be the one European head of state who understands Putin the best. Indeed, he has undergone a complete 180-degree pivot over the last several weeks, carving out a lane for himself as Europe's most vociferous Russia hawk. The same man who once counseled Europe to avoid humiliating Russia is now giving numerous interviews on why Russia's unconditional defeat is paramount. Macron even recommended that sending European ground troops into Ukraine shouldn't be ruled out.

That proposal in particular has gotten him into trouble with his European colleagues. When Macron first unveiled it in late February, multiple European leaders came out immediately to, if not denounce it, then at least make it known that they had no interest in participating in such a scheme. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told the press that "there will be no ground troops, no soldiers on Ukrainian soil who are sent there by European states or NATO states." Poland, one of Ukraine's biggest supporters in Europe, expressed the same.

Macron, though, is stubborn. On Thursday, he argued that the West shouldn't set limits for itself since Putin would simply take advantage of them. Embedded deep in Macron's psyche is the concept of being as ambiguous as possible so the Russians are kept guessing. Europe's other big power, Germany, doesn't see it that way and has

always drawn a line about what Berlin is—and isn't—willing to do to see Putin's invasion flame out. If Macron was trying to deliver a message to Putin that Europe was united on Ukraine policy, his remarks did the exact opposite.

On Friday, Macron, Scholz and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk came together for a three-way summit in Berlin to hash things out. There was no joint statement after the meeting ended, and while the three leaders gave remarks during a joint news appearance, they didn't allow questions. Nonetheless, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will no doubt smile at the outcome. France, Germany and Poland agreed to tap into the interest accumulated from Russia's seized foreign reserves to help reconstruct Ukraine and provide the Ukrainian army with more weapons. They each threw their support behind a Czech initiative to purchase ammunition for Ukraine outside the European Union bloc. The three countries also came to a consensus on establishing a new coalition that will send more long-range rocket artillery into the Ukrainians' hands so they can continue pressuring Russia's supply lines—in occupied Ukraine and inside Russia itself.

All in all, it was a considerable success for Kyiv and went a long way toward mitigating the negative press that sprouted after Macron's comments about theoretical European troop deployments.

Yet the disputes among European powers can't be wished away. While Europe as a whole—with the exception of Hungary and perhaps Slovakia, which are led by prime ministers who are sympathetic to Russia—would like nothing more than to see the Russian army withdraw from Ukrainian territory, there's no denying that individual European states have different strategies for getting to that point. Some are more risk-averse, while others, such as France, are led by highly ambitious leaders who view themselves as de facto spokespeople for the European continent and see the war in Ukraine as a gigantic step toward making Europe a stoic

By **DANIEL DEPETRIS**

Chicago Tribune

Daniel DePetris is a fellow at Defense Priorities and a foreign affairs columnist for the Chicago Tribune.



geopolitical power in its own right.

Some, such as the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, have firsthand experience with what it means to live under Moscow's thumb and argue that it's better to fight the Russians in Ukraine than in Eastern Europe. Others, such as Germany, are perfectly content with backing Ukraine with military aid but have drawn rigid limitations around certain weapons systems, such as the long-range Taurus cruise missile, that the Ukrainians could employ against Russian cities far from the border region.

The Taurus is emblematic of the different interests at play in Europe. It is a highly sophisticated piece of lethal equipment, replete with the best sensors and GPS to make the work of enemy air defenses extremely difficult. The Ukrainians would love nothing more than to have it because the missile can hit targets with precision as far as 300 miles away. But Scholz has repeatedly ruled out donating the system to Ukraine, claiming it would turn Germany into a combatant and increase the risk of Russian escalation. Scholz's colleagues in Europe, Macron included, scoff at that reasoning as an excuse. Yet there's no denying that Scholz's position is still the majority opinion, within the Bundestag and with the German public.

The United States has been Ukraine's primary military supporter, authorizing more than \$44 billion in security aid since the war began. However, it needs to be said that what happens in Ukraine is ultimately more important to European capitals than it is to Washington. If U.S. military support dries up completely, Europe will need to find a way to close at least some of the gap.

Expect the differences between Germany and France to be exposed to more daylight.

Kate Middleton, the Princess of Wales, has cancer. How awful was all our speculating?

By **CARLA HALL**
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Finally, there was the explanation everyone was clamoring for but no one was expecting:

Kate Middleton, the wife of Prince William, the heir to the British throne, reappeared in public after a three-month absence, telling the world that she has cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy.

Never a particularly glib or comfortable public speaker, in a video shared on Instagram she sat on a bench on the grounds of Windsor Castle and gave arguably the most compelling and powerful speech of her life in the public eye explaining that after "major abdominal surgery" in January her doctors thought the condition was noncancerous. "However, tests after the operation found cancer had been present. My medical team therefore advised that I should undergo a course of preventative chemotherapy and I am now in the early stages of that treatment."

Then she took a moment, casting her eyes downward before looking back at the camera. "This of course came as a huge shock," she continued.

It was stunning, awful news, which followed the February announcement that King Charles has cancer. Prince William now has a father with cancer and a wife with cancer. That's a lot for a family to go through in private, but this one has to go through it in public as well.

And it was a huge shock to us, too. Not that the moment of her announcement about having cancer and undergoing grueling chemotherapy should be about how we feel. But it is kind of about us—us being the millions of people around the world who watch every move by Kate (or Catherine as she prefers to be called, though we only occasionally accede to her wishes) and William on X, Instagram and other social media platforms—because we turned her disappearance into a public parlor game.

In the three months that the princess vanished from public view, we were awash in wild theories: She was in a coma. She

was recovering from a Brazilian butt lift. She was divorcing William. She was just on an extended leave from her high-pressure life. Her Photoshopping a publicly released picture of herself and her three young children only made us wonder what had possessed her. And what kind of abdominal surgery requires two months of recuperation, we all asked in exasperation. Well—the kind that leads to a finding of cancer and the start of chemotherapy.

It's hard not to feel some guilt about indulging in speculation when the truth was more devastating than we imagined.

But Kensington Palace, where Kate and William are officially based, left the door wide open for all that speculation when it put out a release in January saying she was doing well after surgery, and added that her illness was not cancer-related. The palace said the Princess of Wales would be back on her feet after Easter.

Though that was accurate at the time the palace put out the statement (Middleton said Friday that her cancer was discovered later) the palace also said it would have no further comment on the princess' condition unless there was "significant new information to share."

Well, it certainly didn't keep its word on that.

OK, so Kensington Palace could manage its communications team better. What's extraordinary is that Kate has now told the world what she's going through. Eventually she would have had to. But better to do it now, before the self-imposed Easter deadline, and before even one more theory exploded online.

Although the real benefit is not that she puts to rest all the wacky speculation but that, without even preaching it, she's a reminder that cancer doesn't discriminate. If a 42-year-old healthy woman (who has better health care than most of us) can get cancer, we all can and should get recommended cancer screenings. Her message Friday offered a moving coda: "For everyone facing this disease, in whatever form, please do not lose faith or hope. You are not alone."

COVID

From page 6

(And to give credit where it's due, he was the first to get me thinking about a 9/11 Commission for COVID.) He reminded me that he favored short-duration measures to slow the rate of spread and keep hospitals from being overwhelmed. And he was concerned that long-term lockdowns would increase the death toll among "essential workers," many of whom had health conditions that put them at elevated risk, or lived in crowded housing with elderly relatives. His worries came true.






Lockdowns caused homes to become more crowded—with college students moving in with families, school age kids at home and others spending much more time in their houses or apartments. Epidemiologists have confirmed that hours of household exposure caused many more cases than exposures of less than 30 minutes. Again, time matters.

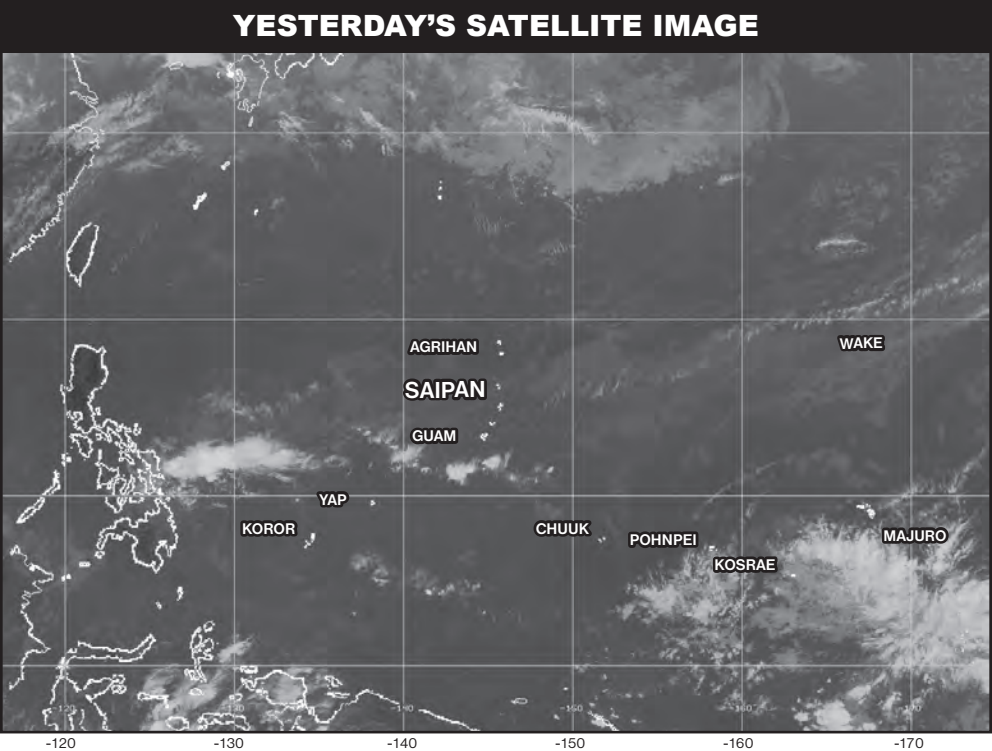
A COVID commission should also measure the lasting impact of these early fumbles. After vaccines were introduced, the US started to see many more deaths than other comparably wealthy countries. We had lower vaccine uptake in part because the public health community had lost the people's trust during that first year.

The justification for blunt, long-term restrictions was the assumption that more people would die as a result of more targeted measures. But that needs close examination—it's also possible that those policies made the situation here much worse and deadlier than it had to be.

Lots of countries made mistakes as COVID spread around the world. The only way to learn from them is to give them a hard, nonpartisan look.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
									
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of showers.		Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of showers.		Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of showers.	
86	75°	86	75°	86	75°	86	75°	86	75°



Moderate to fresh trades prevail, with satellite imagery indicating remnants of a shearline bringing widespread cloud cover to the region. Altimetry indicates seas are 9 to 11 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: <https://www.weather.gov/gum/>

MICRONESIA			▲▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Mostly Cloudy/Wind	87° / 78°	
Palau	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 80°	
Yap	Mostly Cloudy	89° / 81°	
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	87° / 81°	
Pohnpei	Mostly Cloudy	89° / 81°	
Kosrae	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 79°	
Majuro	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 81°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:16 AM	6:28 PM
Wednesday	6:16 AM	6:28 PM
Thursday	6:15 AM	6:28 PM
Friday	6:14 AM	6:28 PM
Saturday	6:13 AM	6:29 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	6:40 AM	7:14 PM
Wednesday	-	7:14 AM	8:01 PM
Thursday	-	7:49 AM	8:51 PM
Friday	-	8:28 AM	9:44 PM
Saturday	-	9:12 AM	10:39 PM

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235.3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of \$180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MARCH 1, 2024

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily	UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily	UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
				7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily	7C3462	08:00AM	1:30PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
				7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily
ROTA TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily
ROTA TO GUAM					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday
GUAM TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday
SAIPAN TO TINIAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily
TINIAN TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

USDA, local partners conducting agriculture census in Guam



UOG

Enumerators Kaelan Arciaga, left, and JThomas Tyquiengco, center, walk with Jeffrey Q. Aguon on his Dededo farm in February while conducting the Census of Agriculture questionnaire.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service, with the cooperation and assistance of the University of Guam Cooperative Extension & Outreach under the College of Natural & Applied Sciences and the Guam Department of Agriculture, has begun visiting farms in Guam to collect Census of Agriculture data from all known farmers.

For this effort, a farm is defined as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and

sold, or normally would have been sold, in 2023.

Typically conducted every five years, the Census of Agriculture is the most widely used source of statistics on the agriculture industry nationwide. For Guam, it provides the most comprehensive and impartial agriculture data at the island level.

Federal and local governments, agribusinesses, organizations, and many more use agriculture census—or ag census—data to support funding research and programs to

improve farming techniques and equipment, building infrastructure for high-speed internet, providing effective production and distribution systems as well as natural disaster preparation, response, and recovery assistance. One of the most important uses of ag census data is to justify claims of farmers who may suffer damages and losses due to natural disasters, such as typhoons.

"The Census of Agriculture is a powerful voice for Guam's agriculture. The in-

formation gathered influences policy decisions that will have a tremendous impact on producers and their communities for years to come," NASS administrator Hubert Hamer said. "I strongly encourage all farmers to prepare their farm records. We need to hear from all of our farmers to provide the most accurate and helpful information about agriculture in the islands."

The 2023 questionnaire includes an expanded list of commodities and new questions on agricultural practices to better capture changes and

trends in the industry.

Responding in the ag census is required by federal law under Title 7 USC 2204(g) Public Law 105-113. The same law requires USDA to keep all information confidential, to use the data only for statistical purposes, and to publish the data in aggregate form to prevent disclosing the identity of any individual producer or farm operation.

Guam farmers are encouraged to prepare their farm records. An enumerator will be in touch in the coming months, or farmers can call

the University of Guam extension office at (671) 735-2060 to schedule a time with an enumerator.

USDA will release the U.S. territory ag census data on its website in the summer of 2025. For more information about the Census of Agriculture, visit nass.usda.gov/AgCensus.

NASS is the federal statistical agency responsible for producing official data about U.S. agriculture and is committed to providing timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture. (PR)



UOG

Kaelan Arciaga, an enumerator with the Census of Agriculture, goes through the census questionnaire with Dolores Aguon on her farm in Dededo this past February.

Radewagen meets with FSM President Simina on Pacific veterans' issues

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) met with Federated States of Micronesia President Wesley Simina last Wednesday as a follow up to the recent pas-

sage of the Compact of Free Association Agreements with FSM, Palau, and the Marshall Islands to discuss implementation, especially related to improving veterans' healthcare treatment for



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) poses with Federated States of Micronesia President Wesley Simina.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) and Federated States of Micronesia President Wesley Simina pose with FSM officials and members of Radewagen's congressional staff.

all Pacific islanders, including American Samoa, Guam, the CNMI, and all three Freely Associated States.

"Improving the efficiency of healthcare for all of our Pacific veterans is a top priority for our American Samoan veterans and their band of brothers and sisters throughout the

Pacific islands," said Radewagen. "Most of that care is and will continue to be handled in Hawaii, and I am committed as vice chairman of the Veterans Committee to make sure proper staffing and appointment time slots are available to our veterans travelling to Hawaii from

such long distances.

"Veterans' Committee chairman Mike Bost is a great supporter of all our veterans in the Pacific and around the globe and he has assured me he will continue to work with me to enhance Pacific veterans care. Chairman Bost understands the challenges of great



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-A. Samoa) talks with Federated States of Micronesia President Wesley Simina.

distances that Pacific island veterans face," she added.

Radewagen appreciates the opportunity to meet with Simina once again on veterans' priorities, and Simina thanked the congresswoman for her work as chairman of the Natural Resources Committee's Task Force on the Indo-Pacific that helped develop the national security agreements between the United States and Micronesia.

"Our national security is only as good as the quality of care that we deliver to our veterans," said Radewagen. (PR)

Business

Uncertain fate for TikTok bill



AP

Devotees of TikTok, Mona Swain, center, and her sister, Rachel Swain, right, both of Atlanta, pose with a sign at the Capitol in Washington, March 13, 2024.

WASHINGTON (AP)—The young voices in the messages left for North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis were laughing, but the words were ominous.

“OK, listen, if you ban TikTok I will find you and shoot you,” one said, giggling and talking over other young voices in the background. “I’ll shoot you and find you and cut you into pieces.” Another threatened to kill Tillis, and then take their own life.

Tillis’s office says it has received around 1,000 calls about TikTok since the House passed legislation this month that would ban the popular app if its China-based owner doesn’t sell its stake. TikTok has been urging its users—many of whom are young—to call their representatives, even providing an easy link to the phone numbers. “The government will take away the community that you and millions of other Americans love,” read one pop-up message from the company when users opened the app.

» Legislation to regulate tech industry has stalled

Tillis, who supports the House bill, reported the call to the police. “What I hated about that was it demonstrates the enormous influence social media platforms have on young people,” he said in an interview.

While more aggressive than most, TikTok’s extensive lobbying campaign is the latest attempt by the tech industry to head off any new legislation—and it’s a fight the industry usually wins. For years Congress has failed to act on bills that would protect users’ privacy, protect children from online threats, make companies more liable for their content and put loose guardrails around artificial intelligence, among other things.

“I mean, it’s almost embarrassing,” says Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Mark Warner, D-Va., a former tech executive who is also supporting the TikTok bill and has long tried to push his colleagues to regulate the industry. “I would hate for us to maintain our perfect zero batting average on tech legislation.”

Some see the TikTok bill as the best chance for now to regulate the tech industry and set a precedent, if a narrow one focused on just one company. President Joe Biden has said he would sign the House bill, which overwhelmingly passed 362-65 this month after a rare 50-0 committee vote moving it to the floor.

But it’s already running into roadblocks in the Senate, where there is little unanimity on the best approach to ensure that China doesn’t access private data from the app’s 170 million U.S. users or influence them through its algorithms.

Other factors are holding the Senate back. The tech industry is broad and falls under the jurisdiction of several different committees. Plus, the issues at play don’t fall cleanly on partisan lines, making it harder for lawmakers to agree on priorities and how legislation should be written. Senate Commerce Committee Chairwoman Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., has so far been reluctant to embrace the TikTok bill, for example, calling for hearings first and suggesting that the Senate may want to rewrite it.

a few exchange shops open.” He and other Iranians spoke on condition their last names not be used, because of potential repercussions for speaking to foreign media about the country’s economic struggles. The two-week holiday is an opportunity to travel abroad, driving demand for U.S. dollars and Euros.

2 crew members die during ‘incident’ on Holland America cruise ship

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP)—Two crew members on a Holland America cruise ship died during an “incident” in the ship’s engineering space, the cruise line said. The unidentified

crew members died Friday while the Florida-based Nieuw Amsterdam was at Half Moon Cay in the Bahamas, Holland America said in a statement. Authorities were notified and the cause of the accident is being investigated, the cruise line said. Crew members were being offered counseling. “All of us at Holland America Line are deeply saddened by this incident and our thoughts and prayers are with our team members’ families at this difficult time,” the statement said. “The safety, security and welfare of all guests and crew are the company’s absolute priority.” The cruise line did not offer any further details about the crew members.

Nation



ACROSS THE NATION

1 person killed and 5 wounded including a police officer in an Indianapolis shooting, police say

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—One person was killed and five others including a police officer were wounded during an early morning shooting Sunday in Indianapolis, police said. Two Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department officers in full uniform were working in off-duty employment at a bar in the 9400 block on East Washington Street when a disturbance erupted in the parking lot around 1:30 a.m., Chief Christopher Bailey said during a news conference. Both officers exchanged gunfire with at least one suspect and one officer was shot in the upper thigh and sustained an additional shoulder injury that may have occurred when he fell after being shot, according to Bailey, who said the officer was in stable condition and expected to be released from a hospital on Sunday. Additional officers responded and found four other people in the parking lot who had been shot. All were transported to nearby hospitals with non-life-threatening injuries. The victims included two 45-year-old men, a 42-year-old man and a 33-year-old woman, Bailey said. A short time later a man arrived at Community East Hospital in Indianapolis with injuries consistent with gunshot wounds and died despite treatment from the medical staff. Detectives believe he was connected to the shooting. The Marion County Coroner’s Office will release his name after next of kin have been notified, Bailey said.

Search for 6-year-old girl who fell into rain-swollen creek now considered recovery, not rescue

CHESTER, Pa. (AP)—The search for a 6-year-old girl who was swept away in a rain-swollen southeastern Pennsylvania creek has become a recovery mission rather than a rescue mission, authorities said Sunday. Authorities in Chester County said the child was reported missing at about 7 p.m. Saturday after she slipped and fell into fast-moving Chester Creek. Several fire companies took part in a search for the next 3 1/2 hours while the Coast Guard continued searching through the night. County fire commissioner John Shirley said the search moved into a recovery mode Sunday, adding that modeling for such situations showed a survivability period of about three hours. He said rescuers were always “look-

ing for that miracle” but after dawn and the opportunity to do a more thorough search, they knew “it wasn’t going to be a rescue, it was going to be a recovery.”

New Jersey first lady Tammy Murphy suspends her Senate campaign to replace indicted Sen. Menendez

WASHINGTON (AP)—New Jersey first lady Tammy Murphy on Sunday suspended her U.S. Senate campaign to replace Democratic Sen. Robert Menendez as he faces federal corruption charges, Murphy said in a video posted to social media that winning the Democratic primary would require her to wage “a very divisive and negative campaign.” “With Donald Trump on the ballot and so much at stake for our nation, I will not in good conscience waste resources tearing down a fellow Democrat,” Murphy said. Her decision to drop out probably clears the way for U.S. Rep. Andy Kim in the Democratic primary on June 4. Kim is mounting a more formidable challenge than is typical against a well-connected political figure in a state where connections count for a lot. Menendez announced that he would not run in that primary but did not rule out seeking reelection as an independent.

A man who survived a California mountain lion attack that killed his brother is expected to recover

GEORGETOWN, Calif. (AP)—An 18-year-old Northern California man who survived a mountain lion attack that killed his older brother is expected to recover, authorities said Sunday. The 21-year-old’s death on Saturday in a remote area northeast of Sacramento was the first fatal encounter with a cougar in the state in two decades. The younger man called the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office, reporting that he and his brother had been attacked while hunting for shed antlers near Georgetown, the office said in a statement Saturday. Deputies arrived around 1:30 p.m. to find the younger man with facial injuries. Minutes later, they saw a crouched mountain lion next to the older brother on the ground, according to the statement. The deputies fired their guns and scared off the big cat. The older brother died at the scene.

Geomagnetic storm from a solar flare could disrupt radio communications and create a striking aurora

BOULDER, Colo. (AP)—Space weather forecasters have issued a geomagnetic storm watch through Monday, saying an outburst of plasma from a solar flare could interfere with radio transmissions on Earth. It could also make for great aurora viewing. There’s no reason for the public to be concerned, according to the alert issued Saturday by NOAA’s Space Weather Prediction Center in Boulder, Colorado. The storm could interrupt high-frequency radio transmissions, such as by aircraft trying to communicate with distant traffic control towers. Most commercial aircraft can use satellite transmission as backup, said Jonathan Lash, a forecaster at the center. Satellite operators might have trouble tracking their spacecraft, and power grids could also see some “induced current” in their lines, though nothing they can’t handle, he said.

“For the general public, if you have clear skies at night and you are at higher latitudes, this would be a great opportunity to see the skies light up,” Lash said. Every 11 years, the sun’s magnetic field flips, meaning its north and south poles switch positions. Solar activity changes during that cycle, and it’s now near its most active, called the solar maximum.

Hardy souls across New England and New York dig out after major winter storm

BOSTON (AP)—Thousands of hardy souls across New England spent Sunday digging out after a major weekend storm dumped more than two feet of snow in some areas, caused multiple road accidents, downed power lines and left hundreds of thousands across the Northeast in the dark, some perhaps for days. Heavy snowfall from the storm stretched across the region, including upstate and northern New York through Vermont, New Hampshire, and most of Maine. Many areas saw totals of 8 inches to 12 inches (20 to 30 centimeters) of snow, and some of the highest totals exceeded 30 inches (76 centimeters) in south central Vermont, said Zack Taylor, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service. “So overall, it was a pretty significant winter storm and for some areas that was some of the most snow they’ve seen all winter with a single storm,” Taylor said. The combination of sleet, freezing rain and heavy wet snow took down trees and power lines and was blamed for hundreds of delayed and canceled flights.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Iran’s currency hits a record low

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—Iran’s currency fell to a record low on Sunday, plunging to 613,500 to the dollar, as its people celebrated the Persian New Year. On Sunday, people were trying to exchange rials for foreign currency at Tehran’s main hub of exchange shops in Ferdowsi Street, but most were closed due to the Nowruz holidays, which are run from March 20 to April 2. Mohsen, a 32-year-old employee at one of the exchange shops, said the holiday was contributing to the low prices, “The price is not real, the demand for purchasing dollars is very high, but there are just

Asia

Chinese coast guard ships hit PH boat with water cannons

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Chinese coast guard ships hit a Philippine supply boat with water cannons Saturday in the latest confrontation near a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, causing injuries to its navy crew members and heavy damage to the wooden vessel, Philippine officials said.

The United States and Japan immediately expressed their support to the Philippines, as well as alarm over Chinese forces' aggression off the Second Thomas Shoal, which has been the scene of repeated confrontations between Chinese and Philippine vessels over the past year.

The far-flung shoal has been occupied by a small contingent of Philippine navy and marines on a marooned warship since 1999, but has been surrounded by Chinese coast guard and suspected militia vessels in

an increasingly tense territorial standoff. It's the second time the Philippine boat Un-aizah May 4 has been damaged by the Chinese coast guard's water cannon assault in March alone.

The repeated high-seas confrontations have sparked fears they could degenerate into a larger conflict that could bring China and the United States into a collision.

Washington lays no claims to the busy seaway, a key global trade route, but has deployed Navy ships and fighter jets in what it calls "freedom of navigation" operations, which China has criticized.

The U.S. has also warned repeatedly that it's obligated to defend the Philippines—its oldest treaty ally in Asia—if Filipino forces, ships or aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea.

U.S. State Department

spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement Saturday that the United States "stands with its ally the Philippines and condemns the dangerous actions by the People's Republic of China (PRC) against lawful Philippine maritime operations in the South China Sea on March 23."

He said the Chinese ships' "repeated employment of water cannons and reckless blocking maneuvers resulted in injuries to Filipino service members and significant damage to their resupply vessel, rendering it immobile."

Escorted by two Philippine coast guard ships, the Un-aizah May 4 was en route to deliver supplies and a fresh batch of Filipino sailors to the territorial outpost in the shoal at dawn Saturday when they were blocked and surrounded by Chinese coast guard ships and suspected militia vessels.

that it would eventually hurt South Korea's medical services. But officials say more doctors are urgently needed because South Korea has a rapidly aging population and its doctor-to-population ratio is one of the lowest in the developed world.

In a meeting with ruling party leader Han Dong-hoon on Sunday, representatives of medical professors and doctors at some 40 university hospitals—where the junior doctors work while training—expressed support for the striking doctors, saying the government's recruitment plan "would collapse our country's medical system," Kim Chang-soo, head of the emergency committee at those universities, said Monday.

Senior S. Korean doctors to resign

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—Senior doctors at dozens of hospitals in South Korea planned to submit their resignations Monday in support of medical interns and residents who have been on a strike for five weeks over the government's push to sharply increase medical school admissions, their leader said.

The senior doctors' action won't likely cause an immediate worsening of hospital operations in South Korea because they have said they would continue to work even after submitting their resignations. But prospects for an early end to the medical impasse were also dim, as the doctors' planned

action comes after President Yoon Suk Yeol called for talks with doctors while suggesting a possible softening of punitive steps against the striking junior doctors.

About 12,000 interns and medical residents have faced impending suspensions of their licenses over their refusal to end their strikes, which have caused hundreds of cancelled surgeries and other treatments at their hospitals.

They oppose the government's plan to increase the country's medical school admission cap by two-thirds, saying schools can't handle such a steep increase in students and

N. Korea says Japan prime minister proposed summit with Kim Jong Un

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea said Monday that Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has proposed a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, as the North urged Japan to show sincerity toward improving bilateral ties and realizing their countries' first summit in about 20 years.

Japan's government did not immediately respond to the North Korean announcement. In the statement carried by state media, Kim's sister and senior official, Kim Yo Jong, said Kishida used an unspecified channel to convey his position that he wants to meet Kim Jong Un in person at an early date.

Kim Yo Jong said there will

be no breakthrough in North Korea-Japan relations as long as Kishida's government raises the issue of Japanese citizens abducted to North Korea in past decades and opposes what she described as the North's "exercise of sovereign rights," apparently referring to the North's weapons testing activities.

"If Japan continues to try to interfere with our exercise of our sovereign rights, and continues to be preoccupied with the abduction issue, of which there is nothing more to resolve or investigate, then the prime minister's (offer for talks) will inevitably be labeled as just an attempt to improve his popularity," she said.

"As long as Japan is hostile toward (North Korea) and infringes our sovereign rights, we will consider it as an enemy that is within our target, not as a friend," Kim Yo Jong said. "The prime minister should know that he won't be able to meet the leadership of our country just because he wants to or just because he's determined to."

In February, Kim Yo Jong issued a similar statement on bilateral ties, saying North Korea was open to improving relationships with Japan and even inviting Kishida to Pyongyang. But she said those would be possible only if Tokyo "drops its bad habit of unreasonably pulling up (North Korea) over its legitimate right to self-defense and does not lay such a stumbling block as the already settled abduction issue."

World

4 charged in Moscow attack



A suspect in the Crocus City Hall shooting on Friday sits in a courtroom in the Basmanny District Court, in Moscow, Russia, Sunday, March 24, 2024.

MOSCOW (AP)—Four men accused of staging the Russia concert hall attack that killed more than 130 people appeared before a Moscow court Sunday showing signs of severe beatings as they faced formal terrorism charges. One appeared to be barely conscious during the hearing.

A court statement said two of the suspects accepted their guilt in the assault after being charged in the preliminary hearing, though the men's condition raised questions about whether they were speaking freely. There had been earlier conflicting reports in Russian media outlets that said three or all four

men admitted culpability.

Moscow's Basmanny District Court formally charged Dalerdzhon Mirzoyev, 32; Saidakrami Rachabalizoda, 30; Shamsidin Fariduni, 25; and Mukhammadsobir Faizov, 19, with committing a group terrorist attack resulting in the death of others. The offense carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

The court ordered that the men, all of whom are citizens of Tajikistan, be held in pre-trial custody until May 22.

Russian media had reported that the men were tortured during interrogation by the security services, and Mirzoyev, Rachabalizoda

and Fariduni showed signs of heavy bruising, including swollen faces,

Rachabalizoda also had a heavily bandaged ear. Russian media said Saturday that one of the suspects had his ear cut off during interrogation. The Associated Press couldn't verify the report or the videos purporting to show this.

The fourth suspect, Faizov, was brought to court from a hospital in a wheelchair and sat with his eyes closed throughout the proceedings. He was attended by medics while in court, where he wore a hospital gown and trousers and was seen with multiple cuts.

Court officials said Mirzoyev and Rachabalizoda admitted guilt for the attack after being charged.

WORLD BRIEFS

UN to vote on resolution demanding a cease-fire in Gaza during current Muslim holy month of Ramadan

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The U.N. Security Council is set to vote Monday on a resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The vote comes after Russia and China vetoed a U.S.-sponsored resolution Friday that would have supported "an immediate and sustained cease-fire" in the Israeli-Hamas conflict. The United States warned that the resolution to be voted on Monday morning could hurt negotiations to halt hostilities by the U.S., Egypt and Qatar, raising the possibility of another veto, this time by the Americans. The resolution, put forward by the 10 elected council members, is backed by Russia and China and the 22-nation Arab Group at the United Nations.

Death toll from heavy

rains in southeastern Brazil jumps to 23

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)—Heavy rains in Brazil this weekend killed at least 23 people in the southeastern states of Rio de Janeiro and Espirito Santo. Espirito Santos' state government said Sunday that 15 people died and almost 5,000 were out of their homes due to heavy rains falling since Friday night. Rio authorities reported eight deaths Saturday. Thirteen deaths in Espirito Santo were registered in Mimoso do Sul, a countryside city 74 kilometers (46 miles) south of the state capital, Vitoria. Rescue teams in both states had to stop their work Friday night because of risks of new landslides, with efforts restarting Saturday afternoon.

Over 130 abducted schoolchildren in Nigeria's northwest are rescued after weeks in captivity

KADUNA, Nigeria (AP)—More than 130 children abducted more than two weeks ago from their school in Nigeria's northwestern state of Kaduna were rescued Sunday and are getting psychological support before being returned to their families, the West African nation's military and government officials said. School authorities had told the state government that a total of 287 students were kidnapped when motorcycle-riding gunmen invaded the remote Kuriga school March 7. However, Kaduna Gov. Uba Sani told local media late Sunday that only 137 young people had been abducted during the attack. "All of them have come back home safely," the governor said in a broadcast by the Lagos-based Channels Television. The Associated Press could not reach villagers or school authorities in Kuriga town, which does not have cell-phone service.

Life & Style

'Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire' is No. 1 with \$45.2M, Sweeney's 'Immaculate' lands in 4th

NEW YORK (AP)—Ghost busting is still a good business.

"Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire" collected \$45.2 million in ticket sales over the weekend, according to studio estimates Sunday, handing Sony Pictures the studio's first No. 1 film since last summer.

The opening weekend for "Frozen Empire," in 4,345 theaters, was nearly exactly the same as the \$44 million launch for "Ghostbusters: Afterlife" in 2021. "Afterlife" rebooted the franchise with a sequel built around the descendants (Carrie Coon, Finn Wolfhard, McKenna Grace) of Harold Ramis' Egon Spengler, along with Paul Rudd's seismologist Gary Grooberson.

Neither film has been a hit with critics, but audiences have been more receptive. "Frozen Empire" garnered a B+ CinemaScore from moviegoers, a tick down from the



This image released by Columbia Pictures shows, from left, McKenna Grace, Logan Kim, Dan Aykroyd and Patton Oswalt in a scene from "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire."

A- score for "Afterlife." "Frozen Empire" isn't assured of profitability, but it will hope for sustained business over spring break.

"Ghostbusters" films tend to make a low impact interna-

tionally. In 25 overseas markets, "Frozen Empire" added \$16.4 million.

The latest "Ghostbusters" cost about \$100 million to make. After Jason Reitman took over directing duties

from his father, Ivan Reitman, to helm "Ghostbusters: Afterlife," "Frozen Empire" is directed by Gil Kenan, co-writer of "Afterlife."

Those two sequels took "Ghostbusters" in a more family-oriented, albeit PG-13 rated, direction, with original cast members Dan Aykroyd, Ernie Hudson and Bill Mur-

ray returning in supporting roles. After the 2016 female-led "Ghostbusters" prompted a backlash, Sony rebooted the franchise.

The weekend's other new wide release was "Immaculate," the horror film starring Sydney Sweeney as an American nun at a remote Italian convent. The film, released by Neon following a premiere at SXSW, debuted with \$5.4 million on 2,354 screens. Sweeney's ascending star power helped make "Anyone But You" one of the most successful rom-coms in years. But "Immaculate," an independent production that cost less than \$10 million make, isn't getting the same bounce.

- "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire," \$45.2 million.
- "Dune: Part Two," \$17.6 million.
- "Kung Fu Panda 4," \$16.8 million.
- "Immaculate," \$5.4 million.
- "Arthur the King," \$4.4 million.
- "Late Night With the Devil," \$2.8 million.
- "Imaginary," \$2.8 million.
- "Love Lies Bleeding," \$1.6 million.
- "Cabrini," \$1.4 million.
- "Bob Marley: One Love," \$1.1 million.

Kate and William 'extremely moved' by support since the Princess of Wales' cancer revelation

LONDON (AP)—Kate, the Princess of Wales, and her husband, Prince William, are said to be "extremely moved" by the public's warmth and support following her shocking cancer announcement as tributes continued to pour in Sunday from around the world.

After weeks of frenzied speculation on social media about her health and well-being, Kate said in a candid video message on Friday that she is undergoing chemotherapy for cancer following

major abdominal surgery. The 42-year-old princess said the cancer discovery was a "huge shock" and she was now in the early stages of preventative chemotherapy.

"The prince and princess are both enormously touched by the kind messages from people here in the U.K., across the Commonwealth and around the world in response to Her Royal Highness' message," a spokesperson for Kensington Palace said. "They are extremely moved by the

public's warmth and support and are grateful for the understanding of their request for privacy at this time."

There has been a global outpouring of support, including from U.S. President Joe Biden, and King Charles III who is also undergoing treatment for cancer, which was found after he was undertaking treatment for an enlarged prostate. Neither Kate nor the king have revealed what type of cancer they have or the stage at which it was being treated.

As speculation about the next Bond grows, here's how some actors have responded to casting rumors

LONDON (AP)—Aaron Taylor-Johnson is the latest actor reportedly offered a license to kill and succeed Daniel Craig as the new James Bond.

The "Kick-Ass" star is no stranger to action movies and at 33 is a good age to join the franchise, as producers likely want a 10-year commitment to the role.

Since Craig announced that he was hanging up his tuxedo after five outings as 007—the last being "No Time to Die" in

2021—there has been frenzied speculation over which actor will take the coveted role.

Bond producers have not commented on the Taylor-Johnson rumors.

Speculating about the next Bond is a frequent subject (sometimes even before the job is available), leading British actors to adopt various strategies and responses when the topic comes up.

One of the foremost names in

the frame over the past few years has been Idris Elba, though producer Barbara Broccoli said in 2022 that the "Luther" star had ruled himself out.

"He apparently has said he's out," she told The Associated Press. "We love Idris and he's been a wonderful friend and we love him as an actor. But I think he feels like a, you know, 10- or 12-year commitment or 15-year commitment might be a bit too much for him."

Parent has chosen to keep relatives at arm's length

DEAR ABBY: I grew up in a big lower-class family in which there has always been drama, fights, gossip, etc. I made a vow to myself that when I had my own family, I would raise them better. I keep myself and my children distanced from all of that. Am I wrong for keeping them away from my family? I don't like drama or problems. Sometimes I miss my family, but after a while, I get overwhelmed.

SEPARATE IN CHICAGO

DEAR SEPARATE: As a parent, your responsibility is to protect your children. If you feel exposing them to something might be harmful, you are within your rights to keep them away. However, if you are raising your children in a healthy environment, exposing them to your family drama in LIMITED DOSES isn't likely to be harmful. Afterward, if your relatives behaved badly, use it as a teaching moment. Use them as a "bad example" and point out that in YOUR family, you do not behave that way.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I am a single man who recently turned 40. I am looking to find a wife who, like myself, has never been married and has no kids. I joined several dating websites, but most of the women are divorced or widowed or have kids.

I just discovered a new dating website for single, never married people. I'm not sure if I should join it, but having a website designed for people like me is a great idea. I have

read that 25% of all Americans have never been married. Pew Research just reported a brand-new poll and millions of Americans have never been married, so I am not losing hope. Should I join?

CONTEMPLATING IN FLORIDA

DEAR CONTEMPLATING: By all means, explore that new dating site. When you do, expect to meet women who are considerably younger than you. Remember, however, that once you connect, you will have to take all of the precautions that people on other sites do to ensure that you do not get misled. Dating, regardless of how you meet someone, can be risky. I wish you luck.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I have a neighbor who lives across the street. She's in her late 70s. We've been friendly until recently, when she came to visit with me for coffee. We talked about many different things that day. She had brought me a present and homemade cookies, which was nice.

When I mentioned something that apparently she didn't like or believe, she stood up, announced that she didn't come over to feel "uncomfortable" and left in a huff! I emailed her and sent a handwritten apology, but she hasn't spoken to me since. What should I do with her unopened gift and cookies? I don't feel comfortable accepting them.

DAZED AND CONFUSED

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR D & C: How sad that your neighbor wasn't able to tell you what it was you said that made her so uncomfortable she felt she had to end the relationship. (Perhaps you could have straightened it out at the time.) However, her decision seems to have been made, and you will have to accept it. Because you now feel uncomfortable accepting them, return her gift and the cookies.

■■■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

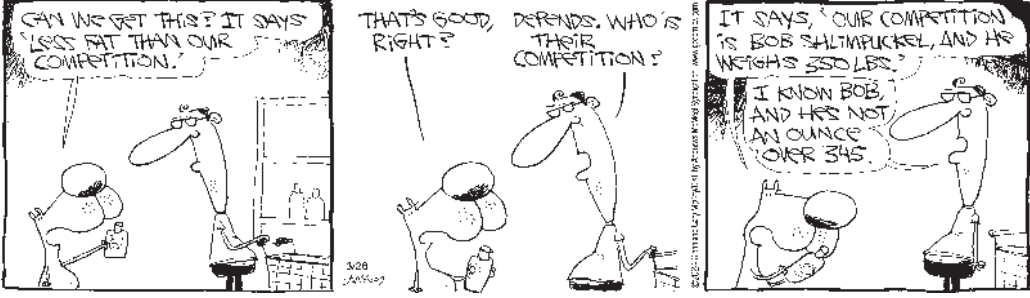
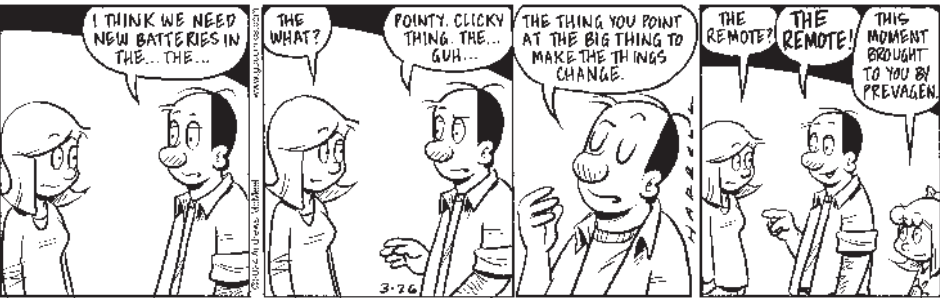


Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 35 Despot 36 Berry used in smoothies 37 Active folks 38 Choir members 40 Not many 42 Sea, to Ravel 43 Small grocery store 48 Altar vow 49 Part of Q.E.D. 50 Actress Singer 51 Indian lentil dish 52 Beget 53 Jazz great Getz

DOWN 1 Snake's warning 2 Hosp. area 3 Mom's mate 4 Stockholm natives 5 Fine spray 6 Writer Wiesel 7 "30 Rock" role 8 Type of diving 9 Sound judgment 10 Jai — 11 Anti-fur org. 16 Scepter 20 — the ramparts ... 37 German article 38 During 39 Castor's mother 40 On — with 41 Fancy party 44 Swiss canton 45 Pre-schooler 46 — -la-la 47 Aachen article

Solution time: 22 mins.

Yesterday's answer 3-26

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Keira Knightley, 39; Kenny Chesney, 56; Martin Short, 74; Steven Tyler, 76.

Happy Birthday: Communicate with passion in your voice and facts to back your claims. Be precise, accurate and thoughtful this year; you will alleviate misunderstandings. Go about your business and take care of details that can make or break how far you get and the changes you can make. Opportunity is present, but taking ownership of what you want is up to you. Your numbers are 6, 10, 19, 27, 31, 42, 46.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Don't rush. Accuracy and preparation are encouraged if you want to go the distance and achieve your goal. Less talk and more action will help you maintain the surprise element that intrigues those you want to impress. Strive for spectacular instead of adequate. ***

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): An opportunity will require change. Consider what others expect of you and prepare to deliver. Work alone until you are happy with the results. Keeping your progress to yourself will protect against outside interference. Enjoy the creative process, set high standards and raise expectations. ***

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Keep your finger on the pulse, be aware of what's happening and don't believe everything you hear. Research, verify and hold others accountable to maintain a stellar reputation and good standing with institutions and authority figures. Ditch the dead weight and clutter, and clear a passage forward. *****

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Immerse yourself in what you are doing. Time spent explaining or conversing with someone will make you anxious and insecure about

what you want to achieve. You'll gain ground and satisfaction through completion and presentation. Make personal growth and security your goals. Romance is favored. **

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Stick close to home and address personal business. Stay updated with the latest information regarding your community, professional changes and environmental warnings. Refuse to let the decisions and changes others initiate tempt you into being a follower. Take the most fulfilling path. *****

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Listen, learn and incorporate what you discover into your life. A change is overdue and will help point you in an appropriate direction to excel. A lifestyle change will help you see relationships differently. ***

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Put home, family and relationships first. Be a good listener, and it will lead to better decisions. What you put out will return, so be kind, generous and helpful. A contract, medical issue or financial investment will take a positive turn that improves your life. ***

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Emotions will spike and influence your reaction in the heat of the moment. Shake off any anxiety and replace it with common sense, facts and whatever it takes to redirect your energy into creative and innovative plans. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Conflicts will arise if you let someone interfere in your life. Redefine what makes you happy and how to structure your every move to ensure you reach your destination. Take better care of your physical well-being and reputation. Personal gain requires hands-on assistance. *****

EUGENIA LAST THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Pay attention to where the money goes, and you'll discover how to lower your overhead. A change at home will allow you to entertain a new and exciting lifestyle. Something you have to offer will lead to financial security. Partnerships and romance are in the stars. **

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Pour your energy into your skills, updates and finding what makes you happy. Revamp your long-term plans and select a place or project that feels compatible. Stop bending to someone else's needs and pursue what will satisfy you. Gratitude comes from choosing what makes you happy. *****

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Choose the route with the highest return. Don't test bureaucratic matters; just deal with them and press forward. You'll find your bliss by following that small voice within. Don't stifle your dreams when manifesting them is the road to inner peace. *** Birthday Baby: You are playful, suggestive and helpful. You are quick-witted and proactive.

☾: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☼: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☼☼: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☼☼☼: Aim high; start new projects. ☼☼☼☼: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

	4	9	7								
3	7		1	4	2	5	9	8			
1		2									
	9	7			3			4			
2	1	8	5	9		3			7		
4	5			1		9			2		
			2	6	1				9		
	2		4		5			7			

Difficulty: ★★ 3/26

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

5	4	3	1	7	8	9	6	2
9	7	2	3	5	6	8	4	1
1	8	6	4	2	9	3	5	7
6	1	7	2	3	5	4	8	9
3	5	9	8	4	7	1	2	6
4	2	8	9	6	1	5	7	3
8	3	5	6	1	2	7	9	4
7	6	1	5	9	4	2	3	8
2	9	4	7	8	3	6	1	5

WONDERWORD By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them. Circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

THE CHIEFS WIN SUPER BOWL LVIII Solution: 9 letters

P	R	E	K	T	U	B	N	O	S	I	R	R	A	H
A	E	M	I	T	F	L	A	H	K	A	E	N	P	T
C	Y	R	T	H	O	M	P	S	O	N	D	A	R	Y
H	A	W	I	L	L	I	A	M	N	Y	T	A	T	E
E	R	N	A	N	N	A	D	O	R	R	V	I	R	R
C	G	A	L	L	E	L	C	E	I	I	C	A	W	I
O	C	M	L	A	L	S	I	C	S	S	L	G	I	T
L	O	D	A	E	M	D	K	K	A	L	D	N	N	N
A	C	R	B	I	L	M	E	S	E	T	E	I	C	E
S	H	A	T	A	A	L	N	G	A	F	E	R	H	C
V	R	H	O	H	C	A	I	Y	G	U	N	R	E	M
E	A	G	O	E	K	A	L	A	E	E	S	E	S	A
G	N	M	F	T	N	O	M	V	P	N	C	H	T	B
A	E	M	I	T	R	E	V	O	I	S	O	I	E	E
S	A	N	F	R	A	N	C	I	S	C	O	T	R	R

©2024 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 3/26
Allegiant, Andy Reid, Bell, Cochrane, Conner, Danna, Football, Game, Goal, Gray, Halftime, Hardman, Harrison Butker, Herring, Kansas City, Las Vegas, MVP, Overtime, Pacheco, Patrick Mahomes, Perine, Reba McEntire, Rice, San Francisco, Smith, Sneed, Taylor, Thompson, Toney, Travis Kelce, Usher, Will I Am, Winchester
Yesterday's Answer: Tradition
To purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 66 through 76, order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

Giannis scores 30, Middleton gets triple-double as Bucks beat OKC



MILWAUKEE (AP)—The Milwaukee Bucks emphatically demonstrated just what they're capable of accomplishing when they have all their top players available.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 30 points and a season-high 19 rebounds, Khris Middleton recorded his second career triple-double and the Bucks trounced the Oklahoma City Thunder 118-93 on Sunday.

"With a full team out there, we realize what we can do as a team," said Middleton, who had 11 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his first triple-double since Jan. 20, 2018. "We have so many guys, so many weapons that can carry us, or guys that can make a play or just attract a crowd."

This marked the first time since a Feb. 3 victory at Dallas that the Bucks had Antetokounmpo, Middleton and seven-time All-NBA guard Damian Lillard on the floor for the same game. It was the first time since a Jan. 31 loss at Portland that they had their preferred starting lineup of Antetokounmpo, Lillard, Middleton, Brook Lopez and Malik Beasley.

Middleton had missed 16 straight games with a sprained left ankle and also sat a victory over the Brooklyn Nets on Thursday due to injury management. Lillard also had a sprained left ankle that caused him to sit out two games in early February. Antetokounmpo returned Thursday after missing two games due to an issue with his left hamstring.

"I just feel this appreciation feeling of having everybody healthy and available to play," Antetokounmpo said. "Because when we're not healthy, I think sometimes we play well, sometimes we don't, sometimes we create this excuse in our mind that like, 'OK, when he gets back, we're going to be better.' But now we're all here. There's no more excuses."

Milwaukee broke open a close game in the second half as Oklahoma City (49-21) fell out of the Western Conference lead. The reigning NBA champion Denver Nuggets (50-21) didn't play Sunday and moved a half-game ahead of the Thunder.

Oklahoma City posted its lowest point total and shot its lowest percentage (.371) of the



Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo shoots past Oklahoma City Thunder's Chet Holmgren during the first half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, March 24, 2024, in Milwaukee.

season. Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 12 points—the first time since Jan. 16 he was held below 20—and sat out the entire fourth quarter after the Bucks had built a lopsided lead.

"They had him in a crowd for much of the night and made it very difficult for him to get his cracks," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. "I thought as a team, just our overall pace and sharpness on offense wasn't where it needed to be."

Milwaukee had seven players score in double figures. Bobby Portis had 15, Lopez 14, Lillard and Pat Connaughton 11 apiece and Jae Crowder 10.

"Just having everybody together just makes the game easier for everybody," Antetokounmpo said. "We don't have to force anything. We just keep on playing good basketball, keep on moving the ball. There's going to be some nights that it's going to be my night. There's going to be some nights that it's going to be Khris' night. There's going to be some nights that it's going to be Dame's night. But we don't have to force anything. Everybody out there is a threat. I

think our bench is unbelievable, and they keep on getting better."

Josh Giddey scored 19 and Jalen Williams added 18 for the Thunder.

The Bucks led 48-47 at half-time and broke open the game by outscoring Oklahoma City 18-2 in the first six-plus minutes of the third quarter. Oklahoma City didn't make its first basket of the third period until Williams converted a layup with 5:38 left that ended a 16-0 Milwaukee spurt.

Oklahoma City's Lu Dort appeared to take a hit to the head under the basket as Williams scored, causing the swingman to leave the game. Although Dort didn't return, Daigneault said after the game that "I think he's fine."

76ERS 121, CLIPPERS 107

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Tobias Harris scored 24 points and Tyrese Maxey added 19 of his 24 in the second half of Philadelphia's victory over James Harden and the Los Angeles Clippers.

Harden had 12 points and 14 assists in his first game against

the 76ers since he forced his way out of Philadelphia last November. After going 0 for 6 on 3-pointers to jeers from a small but vocal cheering section of Sixers fans in Los Angeles, the 10-time All-Star and 2018 MVP will head back to Philadelphia with the Clippers on Wednesday for the rematch.

Cameron Payne had a season-high 23 points with five 3-pointers for the Sixers, who rebounded from a loss to the Lakers on Friday by hitting 18 3-pointers in just their fourth victory in 11 games.

Philadelphia blew an early 17-point lead over the Clips before taking control with a 15-2 run to open the fourth quarter led by Maxey, who started slowly and finished strong for the second straight game in L.A.

Kawhi Leonard scored 20 points and Paul George had 18 for the Clippers, who have lost five of eight and haven't beaten a team with a winning record in three weeks.

TIMBERWOLVES 114, WARRIORS 110

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Anthony Edwards scored 23 points and made 3 of 4 free throws in the final 12 seconds for Minnesota in a victory over Golden State.

Naz Reid had 20 points and a season-high-tying 12 rebounds, and Rudy Gobert added 17 points and 12 rebounds for the Wolves, who matched their season best with 21 made 3-pointers.

Steph Curry scored 31 points for the Warriors, but he missed

the tying 3-point try with 1:27 to go. Gobert converted both free throws at the other end for a five-point lead.

After rebounding a forced airballed 3-pointer by Edwards with 22.6 seconds left, Curry took the rebound all the way for a layup that cut the lead to one. But Edwards got fouled and made two foul shots. Then, he rebounded Klay Thompson's missed 3-pointer from the wing.

Mike Conley added 14 points and seven assists for the Wolves, who are one game behind Denver in the Western Conference race and a half-game back of Oklahoma City. The Nuggets passed the Thunder, who lost at Milwaukee on Sunday.

LAKERS 150, PACERS 145

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Anthony Davis had 36 points and 16 rebounds, LeBron James added 26 points and 10 assists, and the Los Angeles Lakers survived Indiana's strong fourth-quarter comeback for a victory.

Spencer Dinwiddie had 26 points in his biggest offensive game since joining the Lakers, who have won three straight and five of seven. Los Angeles led 116-99 entering the fourth quarter, but Indiana closed the gap to three points down the stretch.

The Lakers held on by scoring 10 points in the final minute—including six free throws by Austin Reaves, who finished with 25 points in the Lakers' highest-scoring performance of the season.

Pascal Siakam scored 19 of

his 36 points in the third quarter for the Pacers, who dropped to 2-1 on their five-game road trip after playing dismal defense in the second and third quarters, allowing 86 points by Los Angeles. Myles Turner added 20 points and TJ McConnell had 17.

PELICANS 114, PISTONS 104

DETROIT, Mich. (AP)—Zion Williamson scored 36 points and led New Orleans to a victory over short-handed Detroit.

Williamson shot 13 for 14 from the floor and 10 for 14 from the line in 36 minutes. He added seven rebounds and six assists and received applause from the crowd at Little Caesars Arena when he left the game with 1:20 remaining.

CJ McCollum scored 23 points for the Pelicans, who have won five of six.

The Pistons played without four of their five starters. Cade Cunningham (knee), Jalen Duren (back), Isaiah Stewart (hamstring) and Ausar Thompson (illness) missed the game, and sixth man Simone Fontecchio (toe) was also sidelined. Jaden Ivey was the only available player to have scored more than 500 points this season.

Chimezu Metu and Malachi Flynn each scored 17 points for Detroit, which lost its sixth straight. Ivey added 16 points and Buddy Boeheim had a career-high 13. The Pistons need four wins in their last 11 games to avoid exceeding the franchise record of 66 losses.

HEAT 121, CAVALIERS 84

MIAMI (AP)—Haywood Highsmith scored 18 points, part of a 59-point effort by Miami's reserves, and the Heat built what was their biggest lead in more than a decade on the way to beating Cleveland.

Bam Adebayo had 15 points and 16 rebounds and Jimmy Butler scored 15 points for the Heat, who led by 45 in the fourth quarter. Their biggest lead this season entering Sunday was 33, also against Cleveland on Nov. 22, and the 45-point cushion was their largest since leading Chicago by 46 in a playoff game on May 8, 2013.

Miami started the day seventh in the Eastern Conference and ended there as well, tied with Philadelphia at 39-32. The 76ers won at the Los Angeles Clippers earlier Sunday, but currently trail the Heat because of the head-to-head tiebreaker.

Evan Mobley scored 15 points for Cleveland, which lost for the seventh time in 10 games but remained No. 3 in the East, a half-game ahead of New York.

Terry Rozier and Thomas Bryant each scored 14 for Miami.

Dunn suspended 2 games, Smith banned a game by the NBA for fight in Jazz-Rockets matchup

NEW YORK (AP)—Utah guard Kris Dunn was suspended two games and Houston's Jabari Smith Jr. was banned a game Sunday by the NBA after their fight a night earlier.

The two were away from the

ball when they began grabbing and shoving each other Saturday with 11:55 remaining in the second quarter of the Rockets' 147-119 victory in Houston. The NBA penalized Dunn for initiating the altercation and throwing

a punch in giving him the lengthier punishment.

Dunn will sit out a home game Monday against Dallas and Wednesday against San Antonio. Smith will miss Houston's home game against Portland on Monday.

MadFlex, Hybrid Shop reward top players with limited-edition jerseys

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR



MadFlex Basketball has rewarded its top athletes with free limited-edition jerseys with help from local uniform maker Hybrid Shop and its owner James Rabauliman.

Dexter Tenorio, who heads the basketball academy, said several of their members recently received free jerseys for excelling not only in basketball but also in motocross and weightlifting.

Leading the list is Charlz Sanchez who was part of the Shirley's Coffee Shop team that won the TanHoldings Inter-Company League. He also starred for the Marianas High School team that won 2023-2024 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League championship.

Christian Lucero, Jezpher Navarro, and Onick Ragbon she also received free MadFlex jerseys for winning the 3X3 tournament twice as part of the CNMI National Team 17U squad.

John Lucero, Aiden Sumor Gimed, and Andrei Derek



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Hybrid Shop owner James Rabauliman, left, and MadFlex Basketball head Dexter Tenorio pose with the limited-edition jerseys rewarded to excelling MadFlex athletes.

Tenorio also were rewarded for helping Francisco M. Sablan Middle School to the 2022-2023 IT&E Interscho-

lastic Middle School Basketball League championship. Tenorio was also NMSA Athlete of the Month in August

2022. Gimed was also recognized for winning a silver medal in the 2024 Oceania Weightlifting Championships.

Jerico Manuel also got a free jersey for helping Hopwood Middle School to a championship in 2024. T.J. Ferrer, meanwhile, also got a free jersey for topping the Mini II Class of the Motocross Racing Association.

"Thank you, MadFlex for putting up with the kids and

guiding them in the right path, inside and outside the basketball court. Shoutout to all the student-athletes. May you tackle all your battles head on, do your best, embrace the grind, and be a great," said Rabauliman, who gave a \$300 discount to MadFlex for the complete sets of uniforms.

"I want to give back. I was a student-athlete once with no income. So, I had no extra money to buy my own jersey. Now that I have my own print shop, I am able to give back to the community. So, I thought I should donate the jerseys to the MadFlex program. I saw that Mr. Tenorio is teaching about 100 kids under his program. What a way to reward the kids who excel by giving them limited-edition jerseys!" he added.

Tenorio, for his part, thanked Rabauliman for his generous discount that he considers a donation already—all as a reward for his players' perseverance and hard work, on and off the basketball—and in the case of Ferrer and Gimed in other sports.

"This is a big thing specially for kids who not only pour in their hard work but also time to the sport they love. Of course, they also have to do good in school. Kudos to James and Hybrid Shop for helping us give this incentive to our kids," he added.

KIEFFER

From page 16

Saipan Tribune.

The NMC Golf Open, which is also the signature event of the NMC Foundation, aims to raise funds to build and equip modern, innovative campus facilities that will help expand the CNMI's workforce development efforts, stimulate economic growth, and provide access to quality education for the residents of the CNMI.



MARK RABAGO

From left, NMC Foundation member Roman Tudela, Guam Hotel and Restaurant Association president Mary Rhodes, Northern Marianas College regent Dr. Jesse Tudela, Championship Flight winner Dominic Kieffer, NMC regent Zenie Mafnas, and NMC president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero.

NORIKO

From page 16

the weather, she and everyone kept that smile in their face and showcased a great women's spirit.

"Before we started it was already looking like it was going to rain as the road was all wet. But it was no problem."

In a way, last Saturday's 4th Annual NMI Women's Run was a testament to how women can persevere and show love and support.

"Yeah, everyone was like passing by smiling and we push and push...I love it when people can see that."

In the men's division of the 5K, Sildrey Vilorio came in first with a 19:03 run, followed by Pony Tang with a time of 19:30. Jordan Ruiz came in third at 21:04.

The event was organized and sponsored by the Northern Marianas Athletics, Run Saipan, and the Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. It was held to celebrate women as part of the 2024 International Women's Day. This year the event also showed support to those who suffered from domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Kimberlyn King-Hinds was one of the runners that morning and shared her wholehearted support to NMCADSV.

"I am a survivor myself, a sexual assault survivor. I feel that it's very important to come out and support these events with the hope of raising awareness to the long-lasting impact that sexual assault has on women throughout their

lives. I'm a professional and to this day, the post-traumatic stress of my sexual assault is still haunting me."

The former Commonwealth Port Authority board chairwoman said NMCADSV needs everyone's support so the 4th Annual NMI Women's Run was a great way to fundraise for the coalition.

"So, the more people that come out and support events like these, the more awareness we can bring to the community that survivors and victims of assault should be believed. We can't keep coming out and saying, you know, let's have a sexual assault proclamation month, right? We actually have to start believing survivors. And what we're seeing right now in the justice system is that we're seeing a lot of not guilty. Why? Because

of our stereotypes about, you know, how women should respond, right, to their assault, right? So that's why I'm here..." said King-Hinds.

NMA's Robin Sapong shared his gratitude to all participants who joined the race as well as fellow sponsors Run Saipan and NMCADSV for their support."

"On behalf of NMA, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners and stakeholders for their invaluable support in making the NMI Women's Run 2024 a great success. Your collaboration and dedication have played a crucial role in empowering women and promoting fitness in our community. Thank you for being an integral part of this journey. We hope for a bigger turnout in 2025 as we will celebrate our fifth year."

ISAIAH

From page 16

the short course in spring. Although it is a competition for junior swimmers in Japan, there are many participants from overseas.

Last year, the Australian junior team participated. Guam swimmers also participated several times before and this year will mark the very first the CNMI will taking part in the event.

Divisions include 10-and-under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, and the Championship Class where Aleksenko will be participating in.

"It's a competition for top swimmers in the world for junior competitions. The winner's time is equivalent to the World Junior Championships finalist time. Isaiah is the only swimmer to qualify with a Junior Olympic Cup time," said Kimura.

The many time CNMI national coach said the qualifying time for the Junior Olympic Cup is extremely fast and even the CNMI record is far behind.

"For example, the qualifying time for the girls 11-12 50m backstroke is 32.20. The CNMI's national record is 33.20, which means that even

the fastest swimmer in Saipan history has not achieved a qualifying time of even a 12-year-old swimmer in this meet!"

Kimura said Aleksenko would have to be in his best element to make an impression at the Junior Olympic Cup.

"It's a close race with dozens of swimmers crowded together within 0.5 seconds. It will be a thrilling race where the winner will be decided by a 1mm or 2mm difference in finishing touches. Isaiah needs to be 100% in shape without fail."

He added their first goal is just to survive and make it to at least the finals.

"The Top 8 from preliminaries will go to the finals. Our chances are 50/50. It's very scary but also so exciting."

Kimura thanked the following for making their trip to the 47th Junior Olympic Cup in Japan possible: Northern Marianas Sports Association, Northern Mariana Islands Swimming Federation, Pacific Islands Club Saipan, Aqua Resort Club, the Tan family, Saipan Swim Club, and to all the Tsunami Saipan swimmers and parents who support the team. Aleksenko and Kimura will leave for Japan on Wednesday.



Giannis scores 30, Middleton gets triple-double as Bucks beat OKC.

PAGE 14

Saipan Tribune Sports

MadFlex, Hybrid Shop reward top players with limited-edition jerseys.

PAGE 15



16 TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2024

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Kieffer conquers Championship Flight anew

By **MARK RABAGO**
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Dominic Kieffer bridged 2023 and 2024 with another Championship Flight conquest after the 30-year-old GHD Inc. staff engineer won anew the premier division of last weekend's NMC Golf Open at the LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort.

The Minnesota native, who played Division I golf at Colorado State, successfully defended his championship from a year ago after finishing the two-round tournament with an impressive 4-under par 140.

Kieffer finished Day 1 at the west course with a 1-over 73 built around 12 pars, a birdie, four bogeys, and an amazing eagle on the last hole.

He even got better on Day 2 at the east course as he shot an impressive 5-under 67, highlighted with nine pars and seven birdies, plus two bogeys. His birdies were on holes No. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 14.

As for the secret of repeating as champion of the Championship Flight, the Sakati Golf Club member simply said, "just knowing your limits and making shots that I didn't know I could hit."

Kieffer said his most difficult and easiest holes came on both Day 2 at the east coast of

the Kagman golf course.

"Hole No. 11 in the east course was the most challenging. It was straight to a crosswind and it was a very long par-4 hole with a difficult green. The wind was

so strong in one direction so you don't know how to get it. I ended up making par but it was a tough hole and it was easy to lose your ball in the trees."

Hole No. 14 on the same side was the easiest for him, as "it was straight downwind par-5 so it was easy to get there."

Many time CNMI national golf team member Franco Santos came in second to Kieffer in the Championship Flight after he fired a two-day total of 11-over 155, while Ned Norita completed the Top 3 with a 20-over 164 score.

Kieffer pocketed \$800 for topping the division, while Santos and Norita received \$500 and \$300, respectively.



Two-time NMC Golf Open Championship Flight winner Dominic Kieffer shows off his trophy.

The Championship Flight winner half-jokingly said he will just deposit his winnings in the bank. "I'm lame so I will put it in my bank account and save it."

The ultimate goal for Kieffer is he'd win many golf events and use his winnings to travel. "In reality, I'll hopefully be able to use it to travel a little in the future!"

In the A Flight, Domingo Kel Atalig will be promoted to Championship Flight after

winning the division with a 167. He was followed by Qihao Liang and Dominic Von Siebenthal's 168 and 175, respectively. Like the Championship Flight winners, first, second, and third placers in the A Flight went home with \$800, \$500, and \$300, respectively.

Results of the other divisions of the NMC Golf Open will be published in the next editions of the

See **KIEFFER** on Page 15

Noriko tops Women's Run 5K

By **CHRYSTAL MARINO**
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Recent NMI Sports Hall of Famer inductee Noriko Jim placed first in the 5K event of the 4th Annual NMI

Women's Run held last Saturday.

Jim completed the 5K from the Hyatt Regency Saipan parking

lot to Puerto Rico and back with a time of 23:41. She was followed shortly by Kaylen Taflinger who took second place with a 25:02 run. Megumi Takaku Shimada got third with a time of 27:43.

Jim shared with *Saipan Tribune* that she had not expected to run in the event originally.

"After I had run the recent Saipan Marathon, I had got-

ten some backaches, body aches, and such. I thought it would be better to relax for a while because I joined the recent half marathon during the Saipan Marathon two weeks ago."

Jim said that after hearing about the event from her colleagues, she decided she wanted to join the cause and celebrate women.

"I ended up signing up just three days before the event. Anyway, it's a good morning exercise and something I do normally."

She shared that she was so happy to see so many women joining the event. She shared that for her, it didn't matter whether she placed or not as she was just there to have fun and celebrate women.

Jim added that despite

See **NORIKO** on Page 15



Isaiah will be lone wolf for CNMI in Tokyo Jr. Olympic Cup

By **MARK RABAGO**
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR



Isaiah Aleksenko will be the CNMI's lone entry to this year's 47th Junior Olympic Cup at the Tokyo Aquatics Center that will start in Japan this week.

The 17-year-old Marianas High School student and reigning NMSA Male Student Athlete of the Year will be accompanied by Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center head coach Hiroyuki Kimura.

Aleksenko will compete in the 50m butterfly event on



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Isaiah Aleksenko, right, with Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center head coach Hiroyuki Kimura pose for a photo after practice yesterday at Pacific Islands Club Saipan.

March 29 and the 100m butterfly the next day on March 30. Kimura said his ward will swim against 72 swimmers in his first event and 32 swimmers in his second.

"Honestly it feels weird because I'm used to traveling with teammates. I think I'd do better when my teammates travel with me because I have more motivation and support which makes me have more adrenaline making me swim better," said Aleksenko when asked how he feels being the CNMI's lone entry in the Tokyo meet.

The Junior Olympic Cup is held twice a year—the long course in summer and

See **ISAIAH** on Page 15



CHRYSTAL MARINO

Noriko Jim crosses the finish line during the 4th Annual NMI Women's Run 5K event last Saturday at the Hyatt Regency Saipan parking lot.